T. Pinsent.

BX 7117 .J3 1860 v.6
James, John Angell, 1785-1859.
The works of John Angell James

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN
CARRS LANE BIRMINGHAM

EDITED BY HIS SON.

VOL. IX.

ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCHES.

LONDON HAMILTON ADAMS & CO.
BIRMINGHAM HUDSON & SON.
MDCCCLXI.

DISCOURSES ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCHES

BY

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN CARRS LANE BIRMINGHAM

EDITED BY HIS SON.

LONDON HAMILTON ADAMS & CO.
BIRMINGHAM HUDSON & SON.

MDCCCLXI.

The Author was very deeply impressed, if not by the fact, yet with the fear, of a decay of the old piety among the Congregational Churches, and the other bodies in the nation holding their doctrines, and expressed his apprehensions often and strongly. By perhaps the generality of his brethren he was thought too desponding, and some regarded him as discouraging effort by prophecies of evil. Time will show whether his views were groundless; but he did what he could to prevent his forebodings from coming to pass. He entertained them, however, to the last.

In 1859 he addressed several letters on the subject to the Editor of the "Evangelical Magazine," and reprinted them with great additions. The public, however, showed no desire to have them in this new form; and it is perhaps not to be wondered at that the theme should be generally distasteful.

That pamphlet is here added to "The Church in Earnest," and is followed by the Tracts and Prefaces which the Author wrote respecting revivals of religion, and books published with regard to them. They may have an abiding interest, and the pages which they occupy are in excess of the first volumes of this edition. The two letters (to ministers and students) contained in the last volume also purport to be written with a bearing on Revivals, but they seemed better placed there. The Editor is under apprehension that he may have overlooked some minor pieces by the Author on the subject, and if so he will be very glad to be informed of them by a letter addressed to the care of his Birmingham publisher, as he would be very sorry to omit any thing which the Author wrote on a matter which he had so much at heart.

The Author took a peculiar interest in the revivals of religion in

America because, as will be seen in several places of his writings, he believed that Providence will employ the Northern part of that Continent as its chief instrument in the conversion of the world. This belief was based not only on the mental power and energy of the Anglo-Americans, (assimilating to themselves as they do all men of other races who take refuge among them,) and on the extent of their commerce, and their passion for diffusing themselves over the globe; but still more on the predilection which they show for theology, and mental science connected with it, and the care taken by them, among the Presbyterians and Congregationalists especially, that their ministers shall go through a long course of education specifically adapted to prepare them for their work. The Author's mind was haunted by the thought of the influence which their great Western Valley was destined to exercise on the States, and through them, on the world. God avert the danger of all these hopes and the fortunes of the great Republic being quenched in civil war!

CONTENTS.

THE CHURCH IN EARNEST.

	PAGE
The Duties of the Church in reference to the World	17
Remarks on the Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor illustrating Earnestness in Religion	42
Earnestness in reference to Personal Religion	81
Earnestness displayed in Personal Exertions for the Salvation of Souls	108
Parental Earnestness	138
Earnestness manifested by Churches and the Duties of Church Members	161
Circumstances Repressing Earnestness in Religion	202
Inducements to Earnestness in Religion	245
Examples of Earnestness in Religion	291
Means of Increasing the Church's Earnestness	317
The Millennial State of the Church	350

What is the Spiritual State of our Churches? MDCCCLIX 363

Letter and Resolutions of Ministers on the Revival of Religion in America: MDCCCXXVIII 441

Pastoral Letter on Revivals in Religion: MDCCCXXIX 449

Introduction to English Edition of Dr. Sprague's Letters on Revivals of Religion: MDCCCXXXII 489

Preface to Reprint of President Edwards's Treatise on Revivals of Religion: MDCCCXXXIX 522

Preface to English Edition of Mr Finney's Lectures on Revivals of Religion: MDCCCXXXIX 528

The Bearing of the American Revival on the Duties and Hopes of British Christians: MDCCCLVIII 533

THE CHURCH IN EARNEST.

PREFACE.

Last year I ventured to publish a little work, entitled, "An Earnest Ministry the Want of the Times." Most of the Reviews which did me the honour of criticising it, characterised and recommended it as a practical work. Whether this was intended in the way of depreciation or information, it most aptly describes a production, which contains no profound disquisition, no new views, and no development of abstract principles, and pretends to be nothing more than an humble effort, made in love, to stir up the pure minds of my brethren by way of remembrance, and to furnish a few practical directions for beginners in the ministry.

Everyone who writes to do good, and who yields to the impulse which says to him, "Do something; do it;" should well consider not only what he would do, but what he can do: should study, not only his obligations, but his talents, his opportunities, and his means. It was a wise plan of action which the Psalmist laid down for himself, when he said, "Neither do I exercise myself in things too high for me." On this rule I have uniformly endeavoured to act, in all my attempts at authorship. If I have any talent for usefulness it is essentially a practical one. I will not conceal that I have been sometimes almost tempted to envy those who possess greater power of abstract thinking. That is a noble faculty, and the men to whom it is given perform services for truth which are invaluable, and indeed, indispensable; they explain its nature, unfold its beauty, defend it against the attacks of error, and establish

principles to be applied by those who could neither so clearly discover, nor so ably sustain, them. Practical men, however, are as useful in their place, as contemplative ones: and if their department be a more humble, yet it is not a less necessary, one, than that of theorists, philosophers, and logicians. There must be the hands to work the engine, as well as the mind to invent it.

In the exercise of this my vocation, I now send forth another work, not less practical than the one which immediately preceded it, or than several others, the product of my pen. The publication of the volume on "An Earnest Ministry," brought to me many and urgent applications for a similar one, addressed to the Churches. When I considered those appeals, I foresaw what I have since experienced, the difficulty of keeping clear, in this work, of some of the topics involved in the subject of its predecessor. That difficulty I have not been able altogether to avoid. The earnestness of the ministry, and the earnestness of the people, in reference to the same great object, are, on so many points, coincident, that it was neither possible, if it had been desirable, nor desirable, had it been possible, to avoid the repetition of some views and counsels common to both. Yet, even after this explanation, I anticipate a complaint that several portions of this work are but a republication of portions of the other. I cannot altogether deny the charge, and can only observe, in addition to what has been just stated, that as the volumes are intended for two different classes of persons, comparatively few will read both; and that, though in some places the same topics are taken up, the discussion and the illustrations are considerably varied.

To the publication of this work I have been stimulated by an able critique in the "British Quarterly Review," for February last, entitled, "The Christian Ministry, and how to mend it." In that essay occurs the following remark, "We confess, however, that we have been prompted in great part to the writing of this paper, by a fear, lest, while the responsibilities of the

pulpit are discussed, those of the pew should be forgotten; for assuredly while an earnest ministry may conduce to an earnest church, it is only as we possess both, we shall possess an earnest and powerful Christianity."

To the wisdom, truth, and importance of this paragraph, I most heartily subscribe, and in the hope of promoting the union and harmony which it recommends, have addressed this volume to the occupant of the pew, as I did the former to the occupant of the pulpit. Earnestness is equally the duty of both, and so close is the sympathy between them, that it is almost impossible for the one to be, or to continue long, in a state of full devotedness, if the other be not in a similar condition. Even the seraphic ardour of a minister who is as a flame of fire will soon be in danger of cooling down to the lukewarmness of the flock, if his efforts are unsuccessful in raising their spiritual temperature to his own.

It is more than probable that some persons will be of opinion that I under-estimate the piety of the present generation of professors, and the spiritual condition of the church, that I have written in too desponding a tone, and that in adverting to defects and imperfections, I have not done justice to acknowledged excellences. In reply, I observe, that my object is not so much to compare the piety of this age with that of any antecedent one, which is an extremely difficult attempt, as with the standard set up in the Word of God, for all times, and for all states of society. I have followed what appears to me to be the precedent of our Lord's addresses to the seven churches in Asia, and the apostolical epistles to the primitive churches; in which, while good is acknowledged and commended, evil also is disclosed and condemned. How much of complaint, expostulation, and reproof, do we find in these solemn and faithful appeals to the churches of those days! A weak and foolish love, which sees no fault in the object of its blind affection, deals only in flattery and caresses; while

a judicious regard, which is jealous for the honour of its object, and wishes to advance it to perfection, is in danger of being too impatient under a sense of its defects.

Some of my readers will also accuse me of magnifying the dangers to which the evangelical system is likely to be exposed in this and the coming age, from popery, infidelity, and false philosophy. In this I have acted upon the truth of the proverb, that "to be forewarned is to be fore-armed." The man who in such an age as this, folds his arms, closes his eyes, falls back in his chair, and lulls himself to sleep with the easy belief that there is no need of alarm, vigilance, and caution, must have powers of observation, or methods of calculation, very different from mine. Recent events I know, it is said, are most inauspicious for popery. Be it so; but do we imagine that it is dead? Have we forgotten how it recovered from a deeper, and seemingly more deadly wound, inflicted upon it by the first revolution in France? Moreover, is it lost sight of, that though it should be deserted as a temporal power, and left by all secular governments to take care of itself, its spiritual potency to fascinate and to seduce men would still remain? Considering what has occurred, and is still going on in this land of liberty, science, philosophy, and commerce, shall we smile at the fears of those who dread an increase of this pernicious system? As regards infidelity and false philosophy, that man must be a recluse and know nothing of the progress of events, who is ignorant of the rapid advance which these foes of the Bible are making in society. Let the statements which will be found in the following pages be attentively considered, and then say if they who keep watch and ward on the towers of Zion ought not to sound the alarm of an approaching foe.

Danger? Of what? Not indeed of the downfall of either Christianity or Protestantism. What believer in the truth of revelation, or what supporter of the doctrines of the reformation, has a moment's solicitude

on that point? I, for one, feel not a single fear for the safety of either of them. I have no doubt of the final, complete, and glorious triumph of truth over error, and good over evil. Notwithstanding the vicissitudes of human affairs, and some of them disastrous ones too, I am a firm believer in the onward course of events. The way of Providence resembles a noble river, which is ever winding in its channel, and which, though amidst its many convolutions it seems sometimes rolling back upon its source, is ever flowing towards the ocean. In such an age as this, when it would look as if a destroying angel were passing over the despotisms of all Europe, and making way for the sudden, unexpected, and universal reign of liberty, to doubt which way the current is flowing, betrays a deplorable ignorance of the tendencies of events, and of the designs of the great Ruler of the nations. But are liberty and religion identical? Are the downfall of tyranny and the downfall of infidelity sure to be contemporaneous? Will false and seductive philosophy necessarily and immediately wither in the light and air of freedom?

It is to be recollected that there can be no perfect freedom of conscience, while there is a single fetter left upon the expression of religious opinion. The utterance of a man's thoughts must no more be stopped by the stern interdict of the law, than the utterance of his breath. If the next moment we could destroy, by the power of the sword, all the infidel books in existence, we ought not to do it. Christianity gains no honour by any triumph, nor, in the long run, any power, but what she fairly wins by argument, and the blessing of Almighty God. And will her enemies be slow to avail themselves of the new liberty which they are now to have throughout Europe for assailing her? On the contrary, their troops will be reinforced, and with new courage they will advance to the attack. What then? Has Christianity any thing to fear? Nothing for her stability and final triumph. Founded on a rock, the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. But how does

she gain her victories? Not certainly by ignorance, denial, or contempt, of the strength of her foes, for they are many and mighty. Not by careless security. Not by commanding silence to the warders on her keep, or ridiculing and rebuking their alarms, when they see the foe advancing. No: but by sounding the trumpet, calling upon her sacramental hosts to consider the resources of the enemy, bidding them arm for the conflict, and summoning them to her uplifted standard. Besides, who would not wish that the final victory of truth should be won with as little loss as possible to those who are its professed followers? Who would not desire to prevent even the partial and temporary victories of error? And we know that many an army destined to ultimate defeat, has for awhile been successful, and inflicted much injury upon the troops by which it was to be in the end subdued and routed. In this view of matters, I believe the caution of the timid, when it does not amount to panic, may be of some use, in the way of directing the courage of the brave. Such is my defence against those who may accuse me of magnifying the danger to which evangelical religion is in this day exposed from its triple foe. With the calm and assured confidence of its final, complete, and universal triumph, I combine what I consider a well founded dread of its present and partial discomfiture: and in my bright and joyful anticipations of the former, will not forget to guard against the latter.

J. A. J.

April 7th, 1848.

CHAPTER I.

THE DUTIES OF THE CHURCH IN REFERENCE TO THE WORLD.

How much of history, as well as of religion, how much that is momentous to man as a pilgrim to immortality, as well as interesting to him as a sojourner upon earth, is associated with that most familiar, yet most significant word, The Church: what moral power, what high destiny, what divine operations and exalted purposes, are comprehended within its legitimate meaning! Yet no term has been more misunderstood, none more abused. What mistakes have been made about it; what controversies has it occasioned; what usurpation, and tyranny, and bloodshed, has it been made to sanction! And yet, if men would drop their prejudices, and study the subject in that volume which only can decide every question relating to it and involved in it, how easily would it be understood, and how simply and correctly might it be stated!

The church, according to Scripture testimony, was a phrase in use before either Rome or England was known in connection with Christianity; and must mean something which would have existed had those places never received the gospel; and which would still exist, if they were sunk the next hour to the bottom of the ocean.

To appropriate this appellation, therefore, to either of the ecclesiastical organizations bearing these names, and to call the Romish or the English communions, "The church," is as great an impropriety as it would be to apply it to designate the Methodist, the Independent, or the Baptist body. There is a wider signification of the term, which enters into all systems of polity, gathering out of them those who "through grace have believed," and which, contemplating them apart from their sectional distinctions, associates them together by no other bond than the "like precious faith," and views them as possessing "the common salvation." There is "The church."

It is in this sense the word is to be understood in this volume: as meaning that part of the mighty aggregate of God's redeemed people, who are still on earth, "working out their salvation with fear and trembling," and who are "the pillar and ground of truth." Beneath the thin covering of denominational distinctions, there, in all the true believers in Christ which they contain, lies the true church. These sects comprise the reality and contain the divine idea, but they are not identical with it. The fundamental creed of the true church is held by them all alike: and that faith which is essential to the church's existence is also in them all alike. There is much in each that is not of the church, and there is much in each that is. The true link of membership and union is nothing sacerdotal, ceremonial, or political, but something moral and spiritual. Other things may be necessary to regulate the social relations of the various bodies of its professed members, and to direct their intercourse and operations, hence forms of polity and ceremonial observances, but the church

itself consists of all "who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

What a community! A something divine amidst what is human, a heavenly citizenship on earth, an eternal product of Omnipotent love, though surrounded by the ever perishing vanities of what is seen and temporal.

Such is the church, a kingdom, not of this world, chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost: and set up to be to the praise of his glory, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," as "an habitation of God through the Spirit." None but God himself can adequately understand, much less fully comprehend, the vast importance, the intrinsic worth, the real glory of this community: divested of all those foreign, impure, and disfiguring accretions which ignorance and superstition, fraud and ambition, have gathered around it, it is a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty in the hand of our God. How has its venerable and sacred name been abused and prostituted to sanction the principles, and abet the designs, of ecclesiastical tyranny; to inflame the darkest passions and perpetrate the foulest deeds; to subvert the liberties of mankind, and to arrest the progress of social improvement; till "the church," has become the reproach of religion, the scoff of infidelity, and the deepest blot of history! But that is not the church, and the organizations which have called themselves such, have but usurped an honour which does not belong to them.

It is quite time for all professing Christians to begin to think more of the church, as recognised by its divine

Head, and less of their church, as limited by their peculiarities. They can never answer the end and purpose for which this communion is set up in the world, till they better understand its nature. As long as they lose what is universal in what is partial; what is catholic in what is denominational; what is essential in what is accidental; in short, as long as forms of polity, however important in their place, rather than fundamental truths, constitute in their view the basis of the church, the grand designs of God, in reference to his kingdom upon earth, cannot be fully carried out, and the end of its existence must be in some measure lost.

What, then, is the design which God intends the church to accomplish in this world, and with relation to the world?

There is a subjective design which refers to itself, this is obviously its own salvation. God, in the exuberance of his love, and in the riches of his mercy, has determined to save, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, all those who repent and believe. Them he will redeem by the blood of the cross, and the grace of the Spirit, from the guilt, power, and love of sin, from death and hell, and bring them into a state of favour and holiness here, and to the felicities and honours of heaven hereafter: all to the praise of the glory of his own grace, wisdom, truth, and justice.

But I now speak of the objective purpose of the church, so far as this purpose applies to our world. This is two-fold, it is designed to be a witnessing and a proselyting church, in other words to be the depository and the herald of the truth.

The first part of its mission is to receive the truth, and bear testimony for God in, and to, our world. The

universe is full of witnesses for its Divine Creator. "There is one important respect in which all its objects, from the atom to the archangel, unite, all are witnesses for God." "The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth forth his handy-work." Everything on our earth, by silent yet expressive testimony, speaks of God, and for him. Science, the great prophet and expounder of nature, bears constant, though in some instances reluctant, testimony for him who created all things by his power. Chemistry bears witness to his wisdom, astronomy to his immensity, and geology to his eternity. On every leaf, on every blade, and every pebble, He has written his name and impressed his character; so that while the solitary voice and gloomy lie of the atheist are saying, There is no God, the million voices around contradict him, and even the pulses of his own heart, and every atom of that organ, contradict him, and say, "There is, and he is thy Maker."

But there are other witnesses for God, who give forth a fuller and more impressive testimony than the material universe, whether viewed as a whole, or contemplated in its separate parts. To the question, "What is God as to his moral character, and his disposition towards the sinful inhabitants of our globe?" the oracle is dumb: to the inquiry, "How shall man be just with God?" it gives no response. The sun with all his glory, the moon with all her beauty, and the earth with all its variety, deliver no testimony of mercy for fallen, guilty man. For this high purpose the church is raised up; this is her momentous vocation, her solemn duty, her blessed privilege. "She is first a focus in which all light from heaven should meet, and all the sanctified excellence of earth be collected and combined;

that it might next be a centre whence the light of truth might radiate, and pour forth in all directions over the face of the earth."

First of all, there is the Divine Head of the church himself. Of him it was predicted, "He shall be for a witness to the people." He claimed this prerogative; and asserted this to be his mission when standing at the bar of Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." The same mission is claimed for him by the beloved apostle, where he calls him "the faithful and true witness." He is personally the true tabernacle of witness, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He came from the bosom of the Father to reveal the nature, plans, purposes, and work of God. He is "the Word," the great prophet, the "true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." In the mysterious constitution of his person, and in the accomplishment of his mediatorial work by his death, resurrection, and intercession, he stands before the universe as an embodiment of truth. The mingled glories of the divine nature, and the full revelation of the divine plans, stream forth from his cross, as a comprehensive and sublime testimony to all that is necessary for man to know and believe in order to salvation.

Next to him, comes the glorious company of the apostles, to repeat in echo the testimony of Christ: and not only by their living voice, but by their inspired and immortal writings, to send out to the uttermost ends of the earth, and down to the latest posterity, the witness of the Son of God.

But neither the Lord Jesus, nor his apostles, are the church, and it is the whole church to whom God says,

"Ye are my witnesses." It is the whole body of the faithful, "the general assembly and church of the first-born," to whom this momentous commission is entrusted, on whom this solemn duty is devolved. And what are the truths to which the witness of the church is to be borne? The unity, spirituality, attributes, and works of the Eternal Father; the divinity and mediation of Christ; the personality, divinity, and operations of the Spirit; the doctrines of regeneration and justification; the greatness and attainableness of salvation; the necessity of holy obedience; the reality and glory of eternal life for the righteous; and the certainty of eternal death for the wicked. Such is in substance the truth which the company of the redeemed are to proclaim to the dark and wicked world. Such are the verities in support of which the voice of the church is to be lifted up on our earth. What sublime doctrines! What stupendous subjects! What transcendent ideas! Viewing man as a moral agent, a sinful creature, a ruined immortal, what to him are all the facts and wonders of science, compared with these things, but as the trifles of a moment, the small dust of the balance!

It is the vocation of every single Christian, however young, poor, or uneducated, to hold up these realities before the minds of men, and attest their divine truth, power, and excellence. Hence the descriptions given by the apostle of the design and business of the church, where he calls her the pillar and ground of the truth. Not that the church either originates or accredits the truth, not that she bears the obligation of obeying it, or infallibly and authoritatively expounds its meaning, but that she is merely the depositary of it for the world, and holds it up to be seen and known

upon the earth. She is the Pharos of the moral world, the light-house of this dark region, exhibiting to public notice, and for general observation, all those subjects which stand connected with man's highest obligations, dearest interests, and immortal hopes. This high vocation, this holy mission, she is to fulfil by sustaining the Christian ministry; by keeping safely her creeds, catechisms, and other formularies; by looking well to the education of her children; by taking care for the instruction of her members in Christian doctrine and duty; by holding fast the form of sound words, and attaching importance to right sentiments; by giving encouragement to orthodox literature; by "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" in short, by every way in which an intelligent and firm, yet catholic-spirited and tolerant zeal for truth can be maintained and diffused. Every Christian man and woman must consider that it is by the truth the world is to be converted to Christ, and all the purposes of divine grace fulfilled, and that they are called to be the conservators of that truth. "He that believeth hath the witness, [or testimony] in himself." He has it as a sacred deposit laid up in his mind, to be ever carried about with him wherever he goes, and is to watch it with the same care as he would if he were individually the last light of the world, and the only remaining witness for God upon the face of the earth.

How high and honourable a vocation! but withal how awful and responsible its duty, to bear witness for God! To be called to the work of perpetually bearing testimony before an ignorant and careless world, on such topics! To lift up amidst the din of politics, the bustle of commerce, the pretensions of science, and the

shouts of folly, a voice which shall remind the busy and eager throng that there are other and more important matters than these, which deserve and demand their attention! To exhibit truths that relate to another world, and which appeal exclusively to faith, to the men who are wholly absorbed in objects of sense! To obtrude the solemn verities of heaven, hell, and eternity, upon the attention of those who mind earthly things! To add the living voice, the acting power, of a truthful and consistent example, to the silent testimony for God and religion which is borne by the churches and chapels that are planted in our streets to scatter the beams of divine truth over the darkness of the surrounding scenes, while at the same time, they open their doors to welcome the enquirers after the reality and repose of a better world. This, this, is the church's mission and vocation: for this she is kept upon earth to be a witness for God, where God is so much forgotten, and to be so far his representative amidst his thoughtless and disobedient creatures.

Already, then, does the need of earnestness commend itself to our judgment, and come home to our heart and conscience. With what state of mind should the church apply herself to such a commission? Is this a work to be touched with careless hands, or pursued with listless steps? If in ordinary and unimportant matters, matters which affect only the character and temporal interests of a fellow creature, witness-bearing is esteemed of importance, and should be entered upon with seriousness, care, and caution, and maintained with conscientious truthfulness; how much more so when we are to bear witness for God, and deliver a testimony that must inevitably affect the

eternal welfare of immortal souls! If false witnessing be branded with such infamy when it is offered in cases that relate to the character and the well-being of a fellow-creature, what degree of criminality must be attached to the act of bearing false witness for God?

Such a view is indeed most impressive, and has not yet perhaps received all the attention due to it from professing Christians. Let it be recollected that the mission and obligation of the church are the mission and obligation of the individual members of which it is composed; for it can, in this case, no otherwise act than by its individual members. To every reader of this work, these considerations are now addressed. You, yes you, personally and individually, are intended to be a witness for God: have you thought of this, and are you habitually thinking of it? This is the end and purpose of your conversion, and for this you are kept upon earth, instead of being immediately taken to heaven. You are now asked, yea implored, seriously to consider and accurately to understand your position, duties, and responsibility. God detains you here to be a light to the world, and you can do this only by your personal religion. Think what kind of religion that ought to be which is to teach men by what is seen in you, the nature of God, the work of Christ, the certainty of immortality, the value of salvation. Think how you ought to act if you would have it said of you, "His conduct is a true witness to all these matters, his character is a true embodiment of the Bible." Will a lukewarm, careless, worldly, inconsistent piety answer such ends? Are you a true or a false witness for God? Tremble, as you well may, at the idea of giving to the world a lying testimony for God. Do, do ask, whether

you are giving out, and living out, the truth concerning him and his word, in your habitual character and conduct.

To bear witness for the truth, however, is not the only purpose which God intends should be accomplished by his church, but also to propagate it. The church is not only to receive the treasure, but to diffuse it; not only to be a stationary oracle, giving out its responses to those who come to it for guidance, but to be a messenger carrying the proclamation into all lands. The Jewish Church was a witness, and a glorious one too, for God. Its temple, with its altar, its sacrifices, and its worship; its kings, its prophets, and its priests; its sabbaths, and, above all, its lively oracles, bore witness for Jehovah. From its very locality, situated as it was in almost the centre of the civilised world, and surrounded as it was by none but idolatrous nations, it was admirably suited to this purpose. There stood the tabernacle of witness, there was the oracle of testimony, ever speaking, not only to the Jews, but to the multitudes of idol-worshipping people that dwelt in their immediate vicinity. The light of that heaven-kindled splendour might have been seen from afar, even by those who dwelt in the realms of darkness, and the valley of the shadow of death. The worshippers of Baal and Moloch, of Ashtaroth and of Tammuz, had only to turn towards Judea to see a light which revealed the atrocity of their conduct, and to hear a voice which rebuked their iniquity. Still this witness was stationary; it gleamed like a beacon from afar, but the horizon bounded its power; it commissioned its priests and its prophets to receive all that came for instruction, but it did not bid them carry the glad tidings to dis-

tant realms. It opened a quiet haven into which the tempest-tossed ships might sail for refuge, but it did not send out the life-boat to fetch the sailors from the wreck; it opened its fold to the returning sheep, but did not send out its shepherd to seek after him in the wilderness to bring him back; it welcomed the prodigal on his return, but did not, like the father in the parable, go out to look for him; all this belongs to the wider comprehension, and the richer mercy of the Christian system. True it is that Judaism enjoined the same neighbour-love as does the Christian dispensation, and made it the duty of a Jew, if his brother erred, to restore him; and if he sinned, to rebuke him for his recovery; but the law enjoined no mission to the Gentiles; it contented itself with summoning the surrounding nations to come and receive instruction from its prophets and its priests; it sent them no message of life, no word of salvation.*

But now turn to the dispensation, under which it is our mercy to live, the brightest and the richest ever granted to man. Christianity has nothing local in its institutions, nothing limited in its provisions, nothing exclusive in its spirit. When the Sun of Righteousness rose upon our world, it was not to stand still over the hills and valleys of Judea, but with the mild aspect of universal benevolence, to pursue its course round the whole earth. Jesus Christ, by the power of his cross, threw down the middle wall of partition, and standing upon its ruins, gathered his apostles around him, and said unto them, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Begin at

* See this beautifully illustrated in Dr. Harris's Sermon, entitled "The Witnessing Church."

Jerusalem, and let those that struck the rock be the first to drink of its refreshing streams; but stay not there; let repentance and remission of sins be preached to all nations. Content not yourselves, as did the priests and the prophets of the law, with inviting the perishing outcasts to come and be saved, but go to them. Mine is a richer grace, the very fulness of mercy; go therefore and carry to every perishing child of Adam the offer of love, the means of salvation; and neither rest nor stop, till not an individual shall have to say, 'no man careth for my soul.'"

Such is the nature, the spirit, and the design of Christianity, and such its difference from Judaism: its doctrines, its duties, its institutions, have no peculiarities which fit them only for one place, or one people, but are like the light of the sun, and the air we breathe, adapted to every age and every people, whether burning under the line, or shivering at the poles; whether enlightened by science and polished by learning, or wrapt in the gloom of barbarism and degraded to the brutal habits of savage life. And as it is adapted to all, so it is intended for all: no one nation can claim a deeper interest than another in the love of the Saviour, or the blessings of salvation. He is the Redeemer of the world. And the gospel being intended for all, it is the duty of those who possess it to extend it to those who have it not. Christianity explains the glowing language, and splendid imagery, in which the ancient seers predicted the times of the Messiah; and has revealed secrets which came not within their horizon: it has cleared up difficulties, the solution of which eluded their inquiries, often as they employed themselves in "searching what

and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." They perceived, through the clouds of their own dispensation, and amidst the haze of futurity, a dim splendour, which they could not comprehend. Those clouds have rolled off, that haze has cleared up, and though still future and distant, the glory of the millennial age is seen by us spreading over all lands. From the mount of vision we behold the beauties of holiness covering every region, and hear the song of salvation rising from every land. To our believing and enraptured eye, no less an object presents itself than the whole earth, reposing in peace beneath the sceptre of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

How much is to be realised in that wondrous scene of the grace and glory, to which, notwithstanding its present aspect of crime, curse, and misery; notwithstanding its present attitude of revolt, hostility, and enmity against God; its present bondage to idolatry, tyranny, and barbarism; our groaning earth, our weeping, bleeding, miserable world, is destined by the God of love. And how, except by the instrumentality of those who proclaim themselves his children by breathing his own Spirit, is this glorious regeneration of the nations to be accomplished? Yes, in this are to be found the vocation, the business, and the triumphs of the church. All this is to be done, not by the intervention of angels, but by the agency of man. The treasure of Christ's immeasurable riches is deposited not in vessels of gold, cast and burnished in heaven, but in vessels of earthly mould, and evincing the meanness, the coarseness, and the brittleness of their original. To

the church, Jehovah is ever saying, "For this purpose have I raised thee up, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth. Behold I send thee far hence to the Gentiles." In fulfilling this commission, the church is not to take her stand upon Calvary, and lifting up the blood-sprinkled sign, to summon the gods of the heathen to come and yield up their usurpations at her feet: no, she is to carry that blessed symbol into the very Pantheon of idolatry, and by the power of God to drive out the rabble of divinities, and take possession of their desolate abode for Him. She is to commence an invasion of the territory of Satan, rescue the vassal nations from his yoke, overturn the altars of paganism on her march, and win the world for Him whose right it is to reign.

This, I repeat, is the purpose of God in continuing his church upon earth; that she shall extend herself by her own sanctified energies, until by holding forth the fact and doctrine of the cross, she shall draw all men unto Him that hung upon it. It is not for us to speculate upon the question whether the world's conversion could have been accomplished in any other way. It is enough for us to know that this is the way God has chosen, and ordained for this purpose. The weakness of the instrument magnifies the power of him by whom it is made efficient, and at the same time humbles the pride of that great adversary, who is to be utterly vanquished in the contest. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Let the church well consider what her divine Head has thus entrusted to her hands, and is ever expecting from her exertions. Her own improvement, of course, is one part of her duty, as I shall afterwards show: (for

what must her own internal condition be, to fit her for such an occupation?) but this is only a part of her duty; the other part is to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord.

Satan, when expelled from heaven, chose this earth as the place where he might raise again the standard of revolt against Christ, find a new battlefield wherein to wage his eternal war, and peradventure fix the seat of his empire of darkness. Hither has the Lord Jesus followed him to bruise his head, and wrest the sceptre from his hands. For a while, and even yet to a considerable extent, the victory seems on the side of the god of this world. The conflict, however, is still going on: the battle still rages: and Jesus Christ summons his church to his standard. For this purpose, to secure his ultimate victory over Satan, he is "Head over all things to his church," and holds the government of the universe in his hands. He has one line of policy, and one plan of action in all he does; and that is the destruction of Satan's kingdom, and the establishment of his own. For this the wheels of nature roll on, and the cycles of time are running out. He is bending every thing to his purpose, and gathering up every thing into his scheme. The revolutions of empires, the issues of battles, the ambition of heroes, and the rise and fall of monarchs; the progress of civilization, the efflux of emigration, and the formation of colonies; the discoveries of science, and the inventions of art; the course of the traveller, and the speculations of the philosopher; the decrees of councils, the edicts of monarchs, and the debates of senates: all, all, are within the sphere of his dominion, subject to the con-

trol of his power, and tributary to the advancement of his cause.

"As the world," says an American preacher, "was wholly intended for the scene of redemption, all the good which it contains belongs to the plan of grace that was laid in Christ. His kingdom comprises every valuable object which God proposed to himself in creating, preserving, and governing the world; the whole amount of his glory upon earth, and the immortal blessedness of millions of men. It is the only cause on earth that deserves an anxious thought: it is the only interest which God pursues or values. For this sole object were men created, and placed in this world, with social affections adapted to their present state. No one interest distinct from the kingdom of Christ are they required to pursue. No laws but such as directly or indirectly, proximately or ultimately, appertain to this kingdom, were ever enacted by heaven to direct their concerns. Their secular employments, their social duties, are enjoined in subordination to this kingdom. Their private and social propensities they are not indeed required to extinguish, but with these about them, to march with a strong and steady step towards this great object, with their eye filled with its magnitude, and with hearts glowing with desires for its promotion. It is required that whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, they should do all with reference to this object. As then we can rely on the decisions of infinite wisdom, expressed both in the precepts and example of God, we are assured that this kingdom ought to engross the supreme cares of men, and exert a commanding influence over all their actions. The bosom of the child should be taught to beat with delight at the name of Jesus, before it is capable of comprehending the nature of his kingdom. The youth ought to regulate all his pleasures, his actions, and his hopes, with an eye fixed on this kingdom. The man ought to respect it in every important undertaking, in all his common concerns, in the government of his passions, and in the thoughts of his heart. Instead of pursuing with headlong zeal their own separate interests, all men should join in promoting this kingdom as the common interest of mankind, the great concern for which they were sent into the world.

"In applying this subject, I would summon, if I were able, all the kingdoms of the earth to arise in one mass to urge forward the cause of the Redeemer. Assemble, ye people, from the four quarters of the globe; awake, ye nations, from your sleepy pillows, combine in this grand object of your existence, this common interest of the world. Ye husbands and wives, why are ye seeking for happiness out of this

kingdom, and overlooking the cause of Christ, as though he had no right to hold an interest on earth. Know ye, that no man is licensed to set up another on this ground, which is sacred to the Redeemer. What have ye to do in this world, if ye will not serve the Lord's anointed? If ye will not submit to his dominion, and join to advance his cause; go, go to some other world; this world was made for Christ. But whither can ye go from his presence? All worlds are under his dominion. Ah! then return and let your bosoms swell with the noble desire to be fellow-workers with the inhabitants of other worlds in serving this glorious kingdom.

"My brethren, my brethren! while all the agents in the universe are employed, some with fervent desire, and others by involuntary instrumentality, to advance the cause of Christ, will an individual of you refuse it your cordial support? Can you in the centre of universal action consent to remain in a torpid state, absorbed in private cares, and contracted into a littleness for which you were never designed? Awake, and generously expand your desires to encircle this benevolent and holy kingdom."

This impassioned language is as true as it is eloquent, and lays before us in a most impressive manner our duty, our business, and our honour, as professing Christians. How little is this practically considered by the great bulk of professing Christians, yea, how little is it understood, or even admitted! How deeply are they sunk in the love and pursuit of the world, and how almost entirely occupied by its cares or its enjoyments! How few of them indulge and cherish such reflections as these; "I live in no ordinary age, either as respects the world or the church; and I must therefore be a man of the age and for it. I cannot flatter myself into the belief that I am one of those extraordinary individuals who are before their age; but then I need not be one of those mean and creeping ones who are behind it. I learn clearly from the Scriptures that Christ's church is a missionary church, and the spirit of Chris-

tianity is essentially a proselyting one. I am not to consider myself as sent into the world merely to get wealth, and enjoy myself. I am the servant of Christ, and must do my Master's work. I am bought with a price, and am not my own, and must yield myself up to my Divine Proprietor. I am a soldier, and I am put in requisition by him to whom I belong. I am called out to service. The trumpet bids me take my station near the standard, and join my comrades in arms to fight the battles of my Lord. The world is in rebellion and hostility against Christ, and I must take the field, and endeavour to bring it into subjection to him. I am but one, but I am one. I cannot do much, but I can do something: and all I can do, I ought to do; and by God's grace, will do."

It is to be known and recollected, I repeat, that what is the business or vocation of the church, is the business or vocation of every one of its members. This is not the work of apostles, or of reformers, or of ministers, or of missionaries only, it is your work, whoever you are by whom these pages are read. In the movements and actions of the body, there is the movement and action of each limb, organ, and sense, all animated by the vitalizing, guiding, and impulsive soul; and each contributes its measure of service in accomplishing whatever is achieved. There was no greater and no other obligation to convert sinners resting on the conscience of the apostle Paul, viewed simply as a Christian, than rests now upon the conscience of each member of the Christian church. If you ask, then, by whom is the high destiny of the church to be fulfilled, the answer comes directly back,

by you. You, each one of you, are the church, at least in part; and in part the church's business lies with you. Ask not for any special command to bind you; I inquire for the special release that exempts you. You cannot without a fresh revelation from heaven be freed from the duty, the personal duty, of seeking the world's conversion. You must have a new Bible, and a new order of things must be set up for you to be freed from this obligation: for the old Bible and the old order of things clearly lay it upon you. Would you wish to be freed from it? What, so insensible to the honour of being a witness for God, and his instrument in converting the world, as to wish to devolve it upon another! Is this the life that comes from Christ the vine, into the branches grafted into him? Is this the vital power which proceeds from the head into every one of the members?

Do ask what you are doing and how you are living. Do the men of the world see clearly that while you are as diligent in business, as careful of your families, and as good citizens, as they are, you have another errand upon earth, another object of pursuit, another engrossing interest, besides what are to be found among things seen and temporal? Are you carrying out the noble assertion of the apostle, made on behalf of the whole church, "Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven?" Does the spiritual patriotism of the kingdom of Christ glow in your bosom, as the love of his country did in that of the Roman citizen in the purest age of the republic? Or are you taken up with getting and enjoying wealth, grandeur, and worldly ease? Citizens of the New Jerusalem, inhabitants of the holy

city that comes down out of heaven, I call upon you to rouse from your lethargy, to throw off your indolence and your worldliness, and to gird yourselves for the great work of bearing testimony for God to the dark, infatuated, and miserable world. Leave it not exclusively to ministers and missionaries, it is yours also to lift high the heaven-lighted torch which is to illuminate the earth. But then, for such a purpose, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? What an honour, and what an arduous one too, would you deem it, to have a commission to carry a specific to a country where the plague was sweeping its inhabitants by millions to the grave; or to be the herald of emancipation to a nation of slaves; or to convoy a fleet of vessels laden with food to a starving people! But infinitely higher than this is your commission, for you are "put in trust" with the gospel for curing the diseases, achieving the liberty, and providing the food, of countless millions of immortal souls. God has called you first of all to obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory, for yourself; and being thus qualified for the work, then, as far as in you lies, to extend that salvation to the ends of the earth. Christians, there is your vocation; understand it, value it, pursue it: "'Tis what might fill an angel's heart, and filled a Saviour's hands."

And a proselyting church must of course be an earnest one. He must have formed very inadequate ideas of what is necessary for the conversion of the world from sin and Satan to Christ and holiness, who imagines it will ever be done without the most intense earnestness, and a degree of self-devotement which has

never been witnessed, except in comparatively few instances, since the days of the apostles. It was this that made even the heroic Paul exclaim, in agonizing consciousness of inability, "Who is sufficient for these things!" Let any one imagine what a triumph over all the selfishness, the cupidity, the worldliness, the indolence, the luxuriousness, which are to be found among professors, must take place; and what a predominance the holy, heavenly, spiritual, self-denying, and generous virtues must obtain; what a general breaking down of all the barriers of prejudice between different denominations of Christians must be effected; what a fair and open field for the operations of Christian zeal must be presented, what a mighty growth of spiritual power in all sections of the one church must be exhibited, before ever the realms of darkness and wickedness are evangelized! What a great work it must be, to overtake the population of even this country with the means of religious instruction, and to reclaim from sterility and desolation the vast and neglected wastes which are found here; and to drain and cultivate these pestilent bogs of ignorance, crime, and misery! And this is only but as the homestead, and the garden, compared with the wilderness of Paganism and Mahommedanism which lies beyond it. Let any man cast his eye over a map of our globe, with the knowledge of the tyrannical governments, the idolatrous religions, the savage barbarism, the multifarious languages, the unapproachable suspicion, which are comprehended under the names and within the lines before him; and then think of winning all to Christ, and covering all those dark domains of sin and Satan with the beauties of

holiness, the joys of hope, and the blessings of salvation; and yet this is the business of the church, its labour, and its hope. Will these vallies be filled up, these mountains be levelled, will these crooked things be made strait, and these rough places be made plain, without an earnestness such as we have never yet witnessed? Is there not an agonizing effort, such as we know nothing about, yet to be called forth, by which all this is to be achieved? We have even yet to learn what kind of work we have undertaken in setting our hands to the world's conversion, and must be made to learn, perhaps more painfully and more impressively than we have yet done, the nature of the difficulties that are to be overcome, that we may see what kind of men, and what kind of efforts, are required for the accomplishment of the marvellous and glorious consummation.

This is the burden which the Lord has laid upon us of this age, above most other ages that have preceded us, and we dare not cast it off from us, but must set ourselves to inquire how it is to be borne, so as that his work may prosper, and the church of our day may do her part well and successfully.

It is but too evident that in this age, and perhaps, with few exceptions, in every age, the Church has but very imperfectly and inadequately understood her vocation as a testifying and proselyting body. She has been too secular and too selfish. She has not allowed the wondrous truths which she professes to exert all their power, and has quenched the Divine Spirit which dwells in her as in his bodily temple. Christians seem to be trying the dangerous and desperate experiment of gaining just religion enough to save them from hell and

to take them to heaven; rather than putting forth all their desires and energies to see how much of the light, power, and joy, of true godliness they can possess. They seem as if they would be content to float into the haven of eternal rest upon any plank or fragment of the shipwrecked vessel, rather than intensely long to make a prosperous voyage, and have an "abundant entrance," with every sail set and the precious cargo all preserved, and to drop their anchor amidst the acclamations of the admiring multitude who throng the heavenly strand.

We can conceive that a time will come when the heavenly and holy calling will be better understood and more perfectly exhibited. When Christians will be seen on every hand, taking up as their rule of conduct, the apostle's epitome of his whole moral self, and saying in truth, "For me to live is Christ." When personal ease, domestic comfort, and the acquisition of wealth, knowledge, or fame, though not neglected, will all be considered as quite secondary and subordinate matters to the great business of bearing testimony for God, and converting the world to him. When they will feel that "the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself," and consider themselves as something sacred to God, formed for himself to show forth his praise. Instead of looking with envy and imitation on the men of this world, who devote themselves wholly and successfully to the acquisition of wealth, grandeur, and power, they will pray to be delivered from them, as pursuing a low, sordid, and sinful course, compared with theirs in witnessing for God, and spreading the savour of his knowledge through the world; and will feel that so that they do but fulfil their mission, they can be content to

be witnesses prophesying in sackcloth. They will no more dream of giving themselves up to personal ease and enjoyment, as the great object of their desire and pursuit, to the neglect or lukewarm accomplishment of the design of their profession, than would an ambassador sent to bear testimony for his sovereign and his nation in a foreign court, and before hostile people. Up then, ye soldiers of the cross, gird you for the conflict, quit you like men! The world is all before you. The commission is in your hands. Victory awaits you. With such a Captain and such a cause, what enemy can prevent you from winning the world for Christ, and immortal honours for yourselves?

CHAPTER II.

REMARKS ON THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR, ILLUSTRATING EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

It is a matter of no moment to the design of this work, in what light these epistles are to be considered, whether as the real past histories of the churches there mentioned, and of their actual condition at that time, or as symbolical or prophetical representations of the different states through which the church was then destined to pass in its future history; since the spiritual instruction to be gathered from them is the same in both cases. The former supposition seems the more likely one, and it is probable that these churches were specially under the superintendence of the beloved apostle during the decline of his life; not they alone were so, but they were the more considerable ones under his care; and as the seals, the trumpets, and the vials, were all in sevens, so to preserve the harmony, the churches also were set forth under that number.

Though the epistles were addressed to the presiding pastor or bishop under the designation of "the angel," (for what reasons it does not appear quite clear,) it is evident that they were intended for the whole church.

I do not propose here to go into any minute exposition of these addresses, but only to make some general

remarks upon them, tending to show the nature and necessity of earnest piety, and to stir up the churches to seek after it.

1. Unlike the other inspired apostolical epistles, these are all delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ in person, through the medium of the apostle, and are therefore analogous in that particular to the messages which, under the Jewish dispensation, the prophets delivered to the people, with a "Thus saith the Lord." This indicates the deep interest which Jesus Christ takes in the spiritual welfare of all and each of his churches. His regard to these seven communities was by no means exclusive or special: all others which then existed were as dear to his heart, because as much the purchase of his blood, as they: and so are all that now exist, even the least company of believers in the most obscure village. How exquisitely beautiful is the description given of Him, as "He who walketh amidst the seven golden candlesticks:" and how impressive a symbol is that of the design of each church, that it should be a fountain of the purest light to the place in which it exists. Can anything more emphatically remind us of the devoutness, the zeal, the spiritual knowledge, which each church should possess, since it is formed to illuminate a dark world, is under the personal superintendence of the Lord Jesus; and is an object of his solicitous care? How earnest is he on behalf of every community of the faithful as a whole, and every member of it in particular!

2. The address to each church commences with the same solemn assurance of his intimate acquaintance with its spiritual condition: "I know thy works." He thus declares that he is ever looking upon his churches,

not as we look, from a distance, but with an eye immediately fixed upon each, not with a cursory or general glance, but with a close and minute inspection into the state of every heart; so that his knowledge of each member is as perfect as his knowledge of the entire church, and is derived from its proper source; the real facts of every case being subjected to that all-searching eye which is represented by a flame of fire. This is expressed with still more explicitness in his address to the church at Thyatira, to which he says, "All the churches," not the world merely, but "the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." This asserts not only his power, or his right, but his occupation; he is ever thus engaged; his eyes are always running to and fro through every church. His attention is minute and specific; it is not the church collectively, but the church in its individual members, that is the subject of his scrutiny. How anxiously and how inquisitively should each church say, What does he see in us? and each member say, What does he see in me? Can anything be a stronger incitement to diligence, to earnestness, to entire self-consecration, than the thought that we are "ever in the great task-master's eye?" Over each one of us continually rolls the thrilling and solemn announcement, "I know thy works." Could we but set the Lord always before us; could we but realize him as at our right hand; could we but even look up to him as present, though invisible, saying to him, "Thou God seest me," should we need anything more to stir us up to the most intense devotedness?

3. Christ always begins his addresses to these churches with the language of commendation, where

there is anything to commend. How condescending, kind, and gracious is this, and what a lesson does it furnish to us for regulating our conduct towards each other! How encouraging is this in all our attempts to please him, and what an incentive to labour more abundantly for him! He is not a hard master, nor an ungracious one, turning away with indifference and disdain from the services of his people. The efforts of his feeblest disciple, when made with sincerity, are accepted by him; the wish, the sigh, the tear, the inarticulate and unuttered, because unutterable, groaning, are all noticed by him, and received with a most condescending, "well done." O Christians, shall such a Master be served with a slack hand, tardy foot, or cold heart? Shall stinted, grudged, or lukewarm services be offered to Him? Shall less than the best, or the utmost, be done for Him? "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

4. At the same time, Christ, in the exercise of righteous severity, rebuked each church for what was wrong, where he found anything worthy of reproof. His love is not a blind and doating affection, which sees no fault in its object; but is a wise and judicious regard, which searches out failings, not so much to expose and punish, as to correct and remove them. Even to the most corrupt of the seven churches, he said, after a severe reprehension, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Inconsistent and negligent professors! ye who know your worldliness; your evil dispositions; your

breaches of truth, honour, and justice; your neglects of prayer in the closet and the family; your general declensions and decay of piety; your gross irregularities and manifest inconsistencies, hearken to his reproving voice; look at his frowning countenance; dread his continued rebukes. Amend your doings. Put away the evil that is in you. He will not tolerate sin in you; nor should you in yourselves.

5. Each address closes with a promise of reward to those who are victorious in the Christian conflict. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God: he shall not be hurt by the second death: I will give to him to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it: I will give him power over the nations: he shall be clothed with white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels; I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God: and I will write upon him my new name, and he shall sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."

Such are the exceeding great and precious promises which are made to those who, in the fight of faith, "come off more than conquerors through him that hath loved them;" and which, though distributed among the churches, will all be fulfilled in every individual victor. Though some of the expressions have a meaning which can never be fully developed in this world, that very

difficulty seems to add to their value, since it exhibits in vague and general outline an object too vast to be comprehended, and too bright to be seen by our present limited and feeble vision. Christians, look up at these stupendous objects of hope, floating in obscure grandeur behind the dim and mysterious transparency of Holy Scripture; and then imagine, and you can only faintly imagine it, the reward of your successful diligence. You are engaged in a conflict of immense difficulty, and of tremendous importance. See what consequences hang upon it; and for what a stake you are contending. You are fighting for a throne in heaven, and defeat will not only subject you to this immense loss, but to eternal infamy. You are running a race for an incorruptible crown, and it is a race against time, and not a moment can be spared from its toilsome and earnest prosecution. An archangel coming direct from the throne of God, with all the scenes of eternity and heavenly glory fresh in his recollection, could not make you comprehend the weight, brilliancy, and worth, of that crown which is held forth by the hand of infinite love, to engage your ardour in the contest against sin, Satan, and the world. Earnestness! Where, for what, and in whom should it be expected, if not in him who is contending upon earth for glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life? Is he a mere statue, or a living man, who can see such objects placed before him, and not feel every ambitious desire influenced, and all his energies engaged for their possession? It was on this the mind of the apostle was fixed when he uttered that heart-exciting, soul-inspiring language, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things

which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." If an apostle felt such earnestness indispensable, inevitable, and necessary, how much more more should we!

Let us now take up each epistle separately, and learn the one great lesson which each seems adapted and designed to teach.

EPHESUS.

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write. These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh amidst the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil: and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. This thou hast, thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, (i.e., a sect of practical Antinomians,] which I also hate."

We are ready to exclaim, what a church, and what a character! They worked, yea laboured, for Christ; they were called to suffer persecution, and instead of apostatizing, endured their sufferings with patience; they maintained a strict and holy discipline, and cast out from among them impostors and evil characters! Is any thing wanted here? They seem to have attained almost to perfection. Will the Lord Jesus find any fault with them? Yes, he did. He commended them for their good, but, "Nevertheless," said he, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will

come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of thy place, except thou repent." I know of nothing more alarming and impressive than such a rebuke to such a church: nothing more calculated to awaken solicitude, and compel us to say, if such a church was rebuked for deficiency, how shall we abide the day of his coming?

Now the lesson taught us here is, that no measure of attainment in churches or individual members will satisfy Christ, while any palpable defect in other things is observable. We cannot, we must not, attempt to compound for attention to some things by the neglect of others. Here was a church that excelled in so many arduous duties, that one should have almost expected to hear nothing but the language of unmixed commendation; and are ready to say, if such a community was rebuked for deficiency, what shall be said of us? How we ought to tremble! Their sin was a leaving of first love; their religious affections had abated, the spirituality of their minds had declined, their joy was not so lively, nor their love so ardent, as it once was; and notwithstanding their labour, and patience, and external holiness, the Lord Jesus rebuked them even with threatenings. How fearfully common is this declension! How many are there who are saying:

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord:
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?
What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

This is so common that many are almost ready to

excuse it as a state to be looked for in the natural course of things, as what every body experiences, and therefore what nobody need care much about: but Christ treats it as a sin, and calls upon the party to repent of it; and threatens, if they do not, to remove the candlestick out of its place.

I ask, then, if any thing less than the most intense earnestness can prevent this declension, or recover us from it when we have fallen into it. The language of Christ to us all is, "Go on unto perfection." Which of our modern churches can compare with this at Ephesus, and which of them therefore, should not hear the words of Christ addressed to them, "Repent, repent?"

SMYRNA.

"Unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write, I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

It is observable that this is one of the two churches against which nothing is alleged in the way of blame, and to which no language of rebuke is addressed: and it is evident at the same time that it was much and sorely tried by persecution. This persecution had reduced them to great poverty. "We see here of what little account worldly wealth is in the estimation of Christ. We hear much of respectable congregations and churches, where little else is meant by that, but

that they are numerous or opulent; but the estimation of Christ goes on quite another principle. What a contrast there is between this church and that at Laodicea. They were rich in this world's goods, but poor towards God; these were poor in this world, but rich towards God."

The lesson to be learnt from this church is, that persecution, if it reduce the numbers of professors, is favourable to eminent piety.

In times of unrestricted liberty, external prosperity, and unmolested ease, such as ours, especially in an age when evangelical sentiment is to a certain extent fashionable, professors of religion multiply fast; but like the luxuriant produce of tropical regions, they want the strength and solidity which colder climates and more frosty atmospheres give to the plants and trees which grow under their influence. Persecution, which withers and destroys the profession of multitudes of these effeminate and feeble followers of Christ, leaves the deeply rooted plants of God's own right hand planting still growing strong and fair. What strange and awful havoc in our churches would one year of bitter and oppressive intolerance make! In what numbers would the soft, luxurious, and self-indulgent members drop off from the fellowship of the faithful: and on the other hand, in what majestic grandeur and heroism would the cross-bearers stand forth, and revive the martyr age of suffering and glory! As skilful and intrepid seamen are formed by the tempest; as heroes are made in the battle-field; and as gold is purified in the furnace; so eminent Christians are raised up, and called forth, by the force of persecution.

Let us all consider what kind of religion that must

be which makes a man a martyr; what depth of conviction, what strength of faith, what ardour of love, what liveliness of hope. Let us think what a view and impression of eternity; what an assurance of heaven; what a conquest of the world; what an emancipation from the fear of death there must be, to make a man press forward in his religions profession, not only at the hazard, but with the certainty of bonds, imprisonments, and death. Is ours such a religion? Do we know the power of principle which the prospect of the scaffold could not overcome; and the ardour of an attachment which the agonies of the stake could not extinguish? Have we a self-denial, a habit of mortification and crucifixion as regards our sinful desires, which is itself the germ of the martyr-spirit, and which makes it clearly intelligible how we could die for it? Is there, when we are looking round upon a quiet and happy home, and upon a circle of endeared relations, such a state of mind as this, "I feel as if, by God's grace, I could give up all this, rather than deny my Lord." This is required in all who would be Christ's disciples. He will accept no man on any other terms. It is his own declaration, which we should do well to study, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple; and whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." This single passage seems enough to circulate alarm through all Christendom, and to excite apprehension in the minds of nine-tenths of the professed disciples of the Lamb, about the sincerity of their religion. We are involuntarily led, in consternation, to say, "Who then can be

saved? What diligence and devotedness, what solicitude and intense earnestness, are necessary to justify and sustain our pretensions to such a religion as this? Who has enough of the pure gold, or is free enough from the dross of sin, to stand the test of such a fire?"

PERGAMOS.

"Unto the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things saith he that hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitaines, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth."

Pergamos was the capital of the province, the seat of government, and the residence of a race of monarchs whose ambition it was to make it rival Rome and Alexandria in wealth, grandeur, and elegance. It abounded with idol temples, in which the most impure and lascivious orgies were celebrated; it was addicted to excessive luxury, effeminacy, and corruption, and was infamous in Roman history for the polluting influence which, in its subjugation by that people, it exercised over their conduct. So that very emphatically might it have been said, "Satan's seat was there," and that there

he dwelt as in his loved abode. Yet amidst these abominations was planted a Christian church. It was not to be wondered at that in such a place persecution should be kindled, and should rage against those whose doctrines and practices were a constant and severe rebuke upon the religion and works of the whole city. In the persecution, Antipas, perhaps a faithful pastor, was crowned with martyrdom, and probably others with him. The great bulk of the church continued steadfast amidst surrounding opposition, and pure amidst surrounding vice. It requires a stretch of imagination to conceive of the earnestness which must have been cherished and exhibited by those who remained faithful.

Yet even here there were some who were exceptions to the rest; some that held the doctrines of Balaam, who had instructed Balak to seduce the Israelites by the lascivious rites of the Moabitish idolatry. By this we are to understand that some of the members of that church, while professing the doctrines of the gospel, gave connivance in some way or other to the flagitious idolatry of their city; and, in addition, there were some of the antinomian Nicolaitanes there also. For this the church was called to repentance, which they were to exercise and manifest by bearing testimony against such sins, and by separating the transgressors from their communion.

The lessons to be learnt from the history of this church are two; the danger of professors of religion imitating the manners of the age and country in which they live; and the sinfulness in the sight of God of retaining ungodly persons in communion. In every age and country, the church has been exposed to peculiar trials of its constancy, consistency, and fidelity, by the

prevalence of surrounding evils, ever varying with the circumstances of the times, but always existing in some form or other. These it is its wisdom to know, and its duty to avoid. In them lie its chief danger, and in avoiding them its chief difficulty. It is far more easy to reconcile ourselves to common and prevailing sins, than to such as are rare and infrequent; to follow the multitude to do evil, than to pursue a solitary or almost deserted path of sin. Custom abates the dread, and in the estimation of some, almost annihilates the criminality, of transgression. That cannot be wrong which so many and such reputable persons do without scruple, is the false and fatal but common logic by which Satan deludes not only the world, but also the church. Hence it is the duty of professors to study well the circumstances, habits, customs, and tendencies, of the times in which they live, in order to ascertain what evils have obtained credit under the veil of currency and fashion. God's laws do not change with the times, nor does he lower his requirements to meet the relaxed and degenerate morality of a lukewarm generation. We are not to be carried about by divers and strange practices, any more than by divers and strange doctrines: the morals of Christianity are as fixed and unalterable as its truths. To resist the tyranny of custom, and the seductions of fashion; to wade against the stream of prevalent example; to be singular, when that singularity is an emphatic protest and severe rebuke which are sure to irritate the many who feel themselves condemned by it; to draw down the reproach of ostentatious puritanism, and the imputation of affected sanctimoniousness, this is no easy task; yet it is demanded of us all, but can be achieved only by an earnestness of mind which amounts

to moral heroism. Vices condemned by all, improprieties which are disgraceful and involve the loss of reputation, are easily avoided; and virtues which are in universal repute, as easily practised; but the sins which are attended with no disgrace, but on the contrary have changed their names into virtues, are committed under the plea of necessity; and virtues which have acquired the character of a morose and proud asceticism, are shunned with aversion and disgust. Christian professors! the downward progress of the church of Christ has commenced in our age; the deteriorating process is in operation. Awake, open your eyes, look around you!

But this is not the only lesson taught by the warning to the church at Pergamos: we learn also from it, how highly displeasing it is in the eyes of Christ, when vicious men are allowed to remain in the communion of the church. Every church is intended to be a light of the world, not only by its creed, but by its conduct. Holiness is light, as well as truth. God is said to be light, and by this it is intended that he is holy. Creeds, confessions, and articles, except as they exert a practical influence in producing the fruits of righteousness, do little good; they may be as the flame which is to illuminate a dark world, but the misconduct of those by whom they are professed so beclouds the glass of the lamp with smoke and impurity, that no light comes forth, and the lamp itself is unsightly and offensive. To receive or retain unholy men as members of our churches, is a fearful corruption of the church of Christ, which was ever intended to be a "congregation of faithful men," a communion of saints. How severely did the apostle rebuke the Corinthian church for retaining its inces-

tuous member, and how peremptorily did he command his excision. To retain notorious sinners in the fellowship of the church is the most awful connivance at sin which can be practised in our world, for it is employing the authority of that body to defend the transgressor and to apologize for his offence. There is a strong repugnance in some persons to proceed, almost in every case, to the act of excluding an unworthy member, just as there is in cases of disease, to give up a mortified limb to amputation, but it must be done; the safety as well as the comfort of the body requires it. In the case of sudden falls, and single sins, where there is a deep sense and ingenuous confession of sin, much lenity should be observed; but where the sin is public and aggravated, and the conscience hardened, to show mercy in such a case is high treason against Christ, by retaining enemies and rebels in his kingdom, who are virtually seeking its overthrow. The church is a band of witnesses to the necessity and excellence of holiness, and any thing which can enfeeble or corrupt that testimony is infinitely mischievous to the cause of Christian morality, and therefore grossly insulting to him who died "to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Whenever the church ceases to bear testimony for holiness, it abandons its commission, and is no longer a witness for Christ. If it lean to either side, it should be to the side of severity of discipline, rather than of laxness; since it is far better that an offending member should have this addition to the burden of his punishment, than that the character of the church, as a witness for holiness, should be impaired. What a horrid caricature, what a monstrous perversion, what a profanation of the very idea of a

Christian church, has been given to the world by the so-called church of Rome; that sty of beastly sensuality, that slaughter-house of horrid murder, that emporium of chartered crime, and the commerce of iniquity, which the Vatican presented in some past ages to the eyes of the astonished, disgusted, and loathing world! And even now, what a sphere of Jesuit craft and odious immorality, are most of the countries which are subject to the Roman see, and within the membership of the Roman church. How summarily and truly is the whole described by that one comprehensive and expressive phrase "The mystery of iniquity." The true church must be, and is, in direct opposition to this; it bears upon its lofty front, this inscription, "Holiness to the Lord;" and it stands out, adorned with the beauties of holiness, a living witness for him, who in the seraphs' song is lauded as the "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

THYATIRA.

"Unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write: I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols: and I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death: and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto

every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden."

Thyatira was a city of Macedonia, of some celebrity in its day, and is still a considerable place, under the Turks. In the church at this place our Lord saw much to commend. His eulogium of it is very strong. There were faith, charity, patience, service, works, and (what was the reverse of the state of the church in Ephesus, which had left its first love,) the last works of the church in Thyatira were more than the first. Of how few churches can this be said! How many are rather declining in piety than advancing; but here was growth, progress. Here last love was stronger than first. Yet even in this church there was something to condemn; nor would it do to set over the good against the bad.

What is meant by the woman Jezebel, whether it is to be interpreted literally of some female of rank and influence set forth under this name, who exerted a pernicious influence in corrupting the church by false doctrine and practices arising out of it, or whether it is to be understood mystically as importing a corrupt faction, who, though united to God's people as Jezebel was by marrying an Israelitish prince, yet were attached to idolatry, and laboured to seduce others into it, is not easy to determine; nor is it important to our present purpose that it should be so determined. Probably the allusion is to some false teachers who were assiduous in corrupting the minds of the church. Against these wicked men God denounced the most awful threatenings, if they repented not.

The lesson for the churches to learn from this epistle is, that it is our duty to set our face against the teachers of false doctrine, especially such doctrine as relaxes the bonds of moral obligation, and is opposed to the purity of God's law.

When our Lord prayed in behalf of his people that they might be sanctified by the truth; and when the apostle described the doctrines of the gospel as "the truth according to godliness," this great sentiment was taught us, that error is essentially polluting; for if truth sanctifies, error must corrupt; unless two causes so diametrically opposite to each other, as truth and falsehood, can produce the same effects. The germ of holiness lies hid in every truth, and of sin in every error; and therefore much does it become the church to hold fast the truth. It is a notion with many that there is no sin in error. The adage of Pope has been adopted by multitudes in these free-thinking, latitudinarian days,

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
> His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

This is true in the letter, but false in the spirit, since there can be no right life, in the scriptural sense of the word "right," but what comes from a right mode of faith, so that if the former be correct, so must be the latter. The intention of the poet, however, was to annihilate the importance of distinctive sentiments of religion, and by insinuating that all were equally valuable, or equally valueless, to subvert the very throne of truth, and thus to do away the authority and obligation of the Bible. This hacknied couplet is a dreadful dogma of scepticism, soaked and drenched with infidelity to its very core. This bantling of infidelity has been foisted upon the church, and profanely baptized by the

name of charity: depend upon it, it knows nothing of charity but the name, and if the father of it had not renounced the Bible, he would have known that errors of doctrine, to whatever extent they go, show a mind not yet brought into subjection to Christ. If a man may renounce one truth of revelation, and yet be sinless, he may renounce two; if two, four; if four, eight; if eight, half the Bible; if half, the whole: and yet be innocent. What, then, becomes of those threatenings which are denounced against all unbelievers; and of those numerous passages which make our salvation depend upon the reception of the truth as it is in Jesus? John iii, 18, 36: 2 Cor. iv, 3, 4: Gal. i, 8, 9: 1 John v, 10: 2 John 9, 11. It may be difficult and altogether impossible for us to draw the line between those doctrines which are essential to salvation, and such as are not, and to fix upon the kind and that measure of error which is incompatible with true religion: and we had better not make the attempt, but leave those who hold false doctrines to the justice or mercy of God. There is, in this respect, the same difficulty in practical as in speculative error. Who shall undertake to declare what measure of sinful conduct is incompatible with personal safety as regards eternity? Still we may hold, and should hold, the importance of truth, and the sinfulness of error, as well as of practice, and on this ground should "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." It should be one object, and no inconsiderable one either, of an earnest church, to stand up for the great fundamental truths of salvation. We have arrived at a latitudinarian age: a spurious philosophy is creeping over us: an unconcealed hostility to those truths which we had thought were settled as the faith of the universal

church, is now extensively manifested, and we must not shrink from opposition to it under the pusillanimous dread of being classed with the bigots and petrifactions of a by-gone age. Our theology is our glory; not indeed in the form of a stiff, cold, statue-like symmetry of dogmatic system, but as the warm life-blood flowing through our practical religion. There are those who would persuade us to give up and abandon our creeds; instead of this, our object should be to give them life, vigour, power, and beauty in holy actions, spiritual affections, and heavenly aspirations. The aim of many is to philosophize our faith into metaphysical speculation: ours should be to infuse faith into philosophy. Give up our theology! Then farewell to our piety. Give up our theology! Then dissolve our churches, for our churches are founded upon truth. Give up our theology! Then next vote our Bibles to be myths: and the aim of some is clearly the destruction of all these together, our piety, our churches, our Bibles. What is it that has given us our confessors, but our theology? What is the inscription emblazoned on the banners of the noble army of martyrs, and that has formed the song to which those heroes marched to battle, victory, and death, what but the apostle's injunction, "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints?" Give up our theology! Then what have we, as the children of God, begotten by the incorruptible seed of the Word, and taught to feed upon the unadulterated milk of the Word, to live upon? Give up our theology! Then with what armour and with what weapons shall we carry on the missionary war against the powers of darkness in the fields of Paganism? Give up our theology! And what are we to receive in

return? What is offered to us for that which has founded our churches, been the theme of our ministers, the life of our souls, the means of all the religion we have possessed? What has philosophy ever yet done, what can she do, or is she fitted to do, for our lost world, and ruined race; for groaning, bleeding, dying humanity? No, in abandoning our theology, we give up God's most glorious revelation, and man's last hope.

Let an earnest church therefore put forth its noblest and most determined energies in holding fast the form of sound words. Let there be no coquetting, on the part of our theological literature, with unsanctified genius in the form of infidel poetry and sceptical philosophy; no eulogy on writers and their productions avowedly hostile to Christianity, at any rate, unless accompanied with firm, calm, yet indignant protests against their enmity to revealed truth. Let there be no attempts to catch a compliment from men who hate our religion, for the candour with which their unbelief is treated. Painful instances of this kind have occurred of late, in which periodicals avowedly devoted, not only to Christianity, but to evangelical doctrines, have spoken of infidel writers and their works in a style of compliment, not to say flattery, which has greatly astonished, and sorely grieved the friends of truth. I do not desire that the just tribute to genius should be withheld, much less do I ask that virulent infidels should be assailed with a virulence equal to their own. Our religion teaches us to be courteous, meek, and forbearing; but it teaches us at the same time, "not to bear them which do evil," but to withstand them to the uttermost. Infidelity is never so dangerous as when associated with poetry and philosophy; and to beguile the young to the

dreadful snare, by lavishing compliments on the authors of the mischief, without corresponding warnings against the poison, is strange work for a Christian essayist or reviewer. What is it but to furnish gilding to cover the pill, and honey to conceal the poison? Never, never, was there an era in the history of religion, when it more became the master minds, the beaux esprits, on the side of evangelical truth, to summon their energies to the great conflict now going on between truth and error, and to manifest intense earnestness in upholding the Divine authority and momentous importance of evangelical truth.

SARDIS.

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

Sardis had been the capital of the kingdom of Lydia, and the seat of government of Crœsus, whose wealth is still commemorated by a proverb; while history records no such illustration of the instability of human greatness as the fate which marked his end.

The description of the state of this church is not very creditable to its religious character. It had "a name to live," by which we are to understand it was

held in repute by surrounding churches as in a flourishing condition. Its members, perhaps, were considerable, their circumstances respectable, their orthodoxy undoubted, and their general conduct reputable. They were neither immoral nor heretical, but all the while, though thus esteemed, the church was dead; not in the fullest sense of the term, but comparatively so, for in the next clause it is said, there were some remains of life, though ready to expire. The charges brought against it were very serious, as to its spiritual, though perhaps not as to its moral, condition. Christ tells the members he had not found their works perfect before God (implying that his churches ought to go on to perfection) : he represents their piety as in the lowest state of declension : which was the more sinful, as at one time the church appears to have been in a far better state, from which its present members had degenerated. Many, if not most of them, had defiled their garments, had soiled their profession and affections by worldly conformity, though perhaps not by vice. In short, its condition was such as to be an illustration of the Saviour's metaphor of the salt that had lost its savour. It is bad for the world to be dead; but for a church to be so, is far worse: it is bad when many individuals are so, but when the great bulk of a Christian community is so, it is deplorable indeed. Yet this was not the case with the whole body, for our Lord says, "There were a few names even in Sardis, which had not defiled their garments," whom he would not involve in indiscriminate censure. For their sakes, for the sake of their reputation and their comfort, he excepted them from his general charge against the body.

The lessons to be learnt from the epistle to this

church are two: First, In the midst of general declension it is possible to keep up the power of vital godliness, and in most cases there are some who do so. There are few churches in which, however prevalent may be the corruption of the body, there are none who are exceptions to the general rule; none who are "faithful found among the faithless;" none who mourn in secret for the declension of their brethren, and who by their examples and reproofs endeavour to arrest the progress of decay. Even in the most degenerate days of Israel's apostacy, when Elijah knew not where to look for a second worshipper of the living and true God, there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. What honour encircles those members, how precious are they in the eyes of God, who are not carried away by the swelling stream of corruption, but stand firmly by the doctrines and spiritualities of the gospel profession! Their conduct shows what can be done to make head against prevalent declension. It is a beautiful spectacle to see a few consistent spiritually-minded professors holding on the even tenor of their way, when the greater part of the church is gradually sinking into worldly conformity; bearing high the standard of the cross, and becoming a rallying point for all the piety that remains in the church; labouring by prayer, example, and persuasion, to save the walls of their Zion from bearing the inscription of "Ichabod;" and amidst the indignation, contempt, or reproach of men whose consciences are wounded by their testimony, pursuing their holy and blameless career. Happy few! Your Master knows your works, your trials, and your difficulties, and will reward them all. Be not disheartened therefore or discouraged by the frowns and imputations

of worldly-minded professors, who will not be backward to ascribe your conduct to spiritual pride, or affected singularity, or sanctimonious hypocrisy. Men who withstand the corruptions of the church can expect no better treatment than those who reform the evils of the world. Nay, often a resentment more bitter, an exasperation more angry, and a malignity more envenomed, will be cherished, by inconsistent and hypocritical professors of religion, towards those who rebuke their conduct, than by men of the world, just because they feel a deeper wound inflicted in their conscience. Let us covet to be among the few who are counted worthy to stand in the gap when a breach has been made in the wall, and to keep out the enemy. The prevalence of evil is no excuse for committing it. God can, and will, assist all who are anxious to be kept. He will inspire them, if they seek it, with the courage of heroes, and the constancy of martyrs. He will be a wall of fire round about them for defence, and guide them through every difficulty as by a pillar of cloud. Amidst envious eyes that watch them, spiteful tongues that love to speak ill of them, and hearts that wish and wait for their halting, he will preserve them blameless, and assist them to hold on their way. Let no one fear he cannot be a reformer, or even a martyr. God can nerve the most timid with courage, and make the most faltering fluent in his cause, when anxious to maintain the purity of the church, and to uphold, amidst trying circumstances, the consistency of the Christian profession.

But another and a most impressive lesson which is taught by this epistle, is, that churches may have a reputation for being in a flourishing condition, and yet be all the while in a state of progressive decay.

It was an affecting description which the prophet gave of the kingdom of Israel, when he said, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." Decay is always gradual, and in the case of bodily consumption singularly concealed from the subject of it. Equally deceptive is the spiritual consumption of the soul; and he who is on the very verge of death, in some cases knows not his danger. As it is with individuals, so it is also with churches: the appearances of health to an unpractised eye may be associated with the insidious progress of dissolution. How many individuals, and churches too, are not only flattering themselves that they are in a flourishing condition, but are imposing the same delusion upon others! The place of worship may be commodious, elegant, and free from debt; the minister popular, and approved by his flock; the congregation large, respectable, and influential; the communicants numerous and harmonious; the finances good, and even prosperous; the collections for public institutions liberal and regular; in short, there may be every mark of external prosperity, till the church flatters itself, and is flattered by others, into the idea of its being in a high state of spiritual health. It has "a name to live." But examine its internal state; inquire into its condition as viewed by God; inspect the private conduct of its members, and enquire as to accessions of such as shall be saved: and what a different aspect of things is seen then! How low is the spirit of devotion as evinced by the neglect of the meetings for social prayer; by the omission in many households of family prayer, and by the heartless, perfunctory, and irregular

manner in which it is maintained in others; and by the giving up in numerous cases of private prayer! How feeble is the attachment to evangelical doctrine, and how little relish is there for that truth which is the bread of life to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness! Talent, talent, is the demand; "we want eloquence, genius, oratory," is the cry. Nothing will do without this, and almost any thing will do with it. How prevalent is the spirit of the world in their social intercourse! Routs and parties, differing scarcely any thing from the fashionable circles of the worldly and the gay, are kept up at much expense, and with every accompaniment of frivolity and levity. Let a stranger of devotional taste, spiritual affections, and tenderness of conscience, enter into the families, and frequent the parties, of such a congregation, and what a destitution would he find of the vitality of religion. Under the deceptive appearance of a large and flourishing assembly, an eloquent preacher, and an air of general respectability and satisfaction on the Sabbath-day in the sanctuary, what a deadness of the heart would he find; what a prevailing worldliness in the houses of professors! Alas! how many modern churches answer to the condition of that of Sardis! Here is the precise danger to which above most others, we of this age are exposed, especially the large and externally flourishing churches in the metropolis, and the principal provincial towns. O, let us all, and especially those who are most in danger of coming into, or are already in, this deceptive condition, examine ourselves before God. Let us look beneath the illusive covering of external prosperity, and examine whether disease and decay are lurking underneath.

PHILADELPHIA.

"Unto the church in Philadelphia write. Behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

This is one of the seven churches to which no language of censure is addressed. It is probable they were not distinguished by opulence, but by piety. They were tried by severe persecution, but they kept the word of Christ's patience, and though but feeble as to all that constituted worldly power, and not very strong in numbers, they still maintained their steadfastness, and kept their hold upon the truth with a martyr's grasp. It would seem they had been much tried by the seed of Abraham, who having rejected the true Messiah, were no longer worthy the name of Jews. Amidst all opposition and discouragement they were exhorted still to persevere, by the assurance that they should be aided by Divine help in their religious profession, and that even their persecutors should be compelled to do them honour.

The lesson to be gathered from the history of this church is, that eminent piety and especially immoveable steadfastness in the face of opposition and persecution, is the way to honour.

There are many intimations scattered through the

word of God, that the church is destined to high distinction in the earth, and to receive a tribute of respect and honour from the nations. The prophecies are full of the most glowing descriptions of this kind: and why has she not yet received this promised distinction? Just because she has not fulfilled the condition on which it is to be granted, and that is, eminent and consistent piety. When she is beheld as the tabernacle of God with men, and as having the glory of God; when rising from the dust, she puts on her beautiful garments; then radiant with the light of heaven, and adorned with all the beauties of holiness, she shall be as a "crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God." "Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

As yet the church, so far from gaining the honour and esteem so often foreshadowed in the divine promise, has been an object of contempt and derision: not that God has failed in his promise, but that she has failed in the terms upon which alone she could expect to be esteemed. Religion has not yet generally appeared in that sublime majesty, that heavenly glory, that spotless purity, and that effective beneficence, which alone can command the reverence of mankind. Let her be only seen as a seraph from the skies, pure, benevolent, and consistent, an image of God, and then, though she may be too holy for the carnal heart to love, she will still command respect and admiration. Men will not turn from her with disgust and aversion, as from a spirit of falsehood and mischief; they will not insult and despise her, but will consider it profanity to treat her with

rudeness and scorn. It is the feeble, distorted, and crippled form in which she has too generally appeared, and the strange contrast between the worldliness of her spirit and the heavenliness of her profession; the loftiness of her pretensions, and the lowness of her practice; the extent of her claims, and the insignificance of her deserts, that have brought upon her the contumely and derision which it has been hitherto her lot to receive.

Whoever saw or heard of a Christian, who united in his character all the beneficent, righteous, and gentle virtues of the gospel profession; whose very name was a guarantee for whatsoever things are pure, just, honest, true, lovely, and of good report; who added to his faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity; whoever saw such a character, or one at all approaching to that standard, fail to receive the respect even of his enemies? God will compel men to do him homage. He will bring his foes to his feet, and make them feel how he is honoured of God, and "how awful goodness is." Yes, the greatest persecutors have sometimes paid involuntary homage to eminent and consistent piety, and in every age, and every country, exalted goodness has extorted confessions of respect, even where it has not conciliated affection. It is the exhibition of this eminent piety which, when presented to the world, will soften prejudice, disarm opposition, abate malignity, and render mankind more fully and generally prepared for the reception of the truth of God than they have ever yet been.

LAODICEA.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, I know thy works, that thou art neither

cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see."

Of this city, frequent mention is made in the New Testament, as the seat of a Christian church of some celebrity among the communities of the primitive believers. It is very evident from the epistle, that it was considerable for the number and wealth of its members. Religion rarely thrives amidst much worldly prosperity. Our Lord's words contain a truth which observation and experience unite to confirm; "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Exceptions doubtless there are, but they are only exceptions. I have known professors of religion the better for adversity, but whoever knew one the better for prosperity? If such a case ever occurs, is it not regarded as a prodigy of grace? On the contrary, how many have we seen, whose piety has declined as their wealth increased: and even where religion has not totally disappeared, amidst accumulating opulence, it has retained only the form or shadow of what it once was. Multitudes will in eternity regard their money as having brought upon them their curse:

so says the apostle; "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Yes, it is their bags of gold that drag down the soul of rich men into the pit. The love of money is the cause of more souls being lost than any other in all Christendom. Hence rich churches are rarely eminent for vital godliness. The spiritual state of the church at Laodicea verifies this remark. They were as poor in religion, as they were affluent in worldly wealth. They boasted of their prosperity, saying, "I am rich." It was their matter of glorying; they vaunted and were puffed up, for wealth generates pride, and fosters vanity, beyond anything else. There is more of purse-pride in existence than of any other kind of pride, because nothing gives a man more consequence in general society than wealth.

And what all the while was the spiritual state of this church? There is not a syllable said in the way of commendation of them: they had not grace enough to furnish the Saviour, desirous as he was for something to praise, with matter for one note of approbation. The specific charge which he brought against them was lukewarmness, that middle state between heat and cold. Some professors are ardent almost to an enthusiasm of zeal; others cold to the absolute extinction of all vital heat; either all religion, or with no religion at all; but the Laodiceans were neither the one nor the other: they had no fire, yet they were not ice: they had no decided piety, yet would not leave religion alone: they would not throw off the profession and forms of godliness, yet knew nothing of its power. This state of mind was peculiarly offensive to Christ.

To halt between God and the world, truth and error, holiness and sin, is worse, in some respects, and in some persons, than to be openly irreligious. Corrupt Christianity is more offensive to God than open infidelity. No man thinks the worse of religion for what he sees in the openly profane, but it is far otherwise with respect to religious professors. If he that names the name of Christ depart not from iniquity, the honour of Christ is affected by his conduct. Therefore Christ seems to say, "Be one thing or the other. Have more religion or less; act more consistently, or let religion alone altogether."

Yet the church, though in this deplorable state, was not aware of its condition, but thought all was going on well with it; it did not know that it was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This is surprising and affecting, and gives us in an alarming view, how far self-deception may be carried, especially in the case of those, who like the members of the church at Laodicea, are much taken up with the enjoyment of worldly prosperity. Let a professor of religion have his mind much occupied with the cares of business, and his affections much engrossed with the objects of sense, and it is astonishing how ignorant and mistaken he may remain as to the real state of his soul. Prosperity is the smoothest, easiest, and most unsuspected road to the bottomless pit.

The lesson to be learnt from the condition of this church is too obvious to be mistaken or doubted, and too impressive to be unfelt or unheeded; it is this, lukewarmness in a Christian church is a state peculiarly offensive to Christ; a state which may exist without being properly known or seriously suspected; and which

is very likely to be produced by worldly prosperity. This corrupt community stands, and will stand to the end of time, an awful beacon, warning all the churches of God against a state as ruinous to themselves as it is displeasing, yea disgusting, to him. It is a record which every community of Christians should frequently read with most solemn awe; and it is a record which it especially becomes the churches of our age and country to peruse, since in these days and in this country of liberty, commerce, wealth, and ease, the danger of sinking into this condition is most imminent. Sardis and Laodicea, it may be feared, furnish the types of many of the churches of these times.

I can conceive, and perhaps describe one of these Laodicean professors. By some means or other, either by an alarming illness, the death of a near relative, or an impressive sermon, his mind had become a little interested in the subject of religion: but his knowledge of its nature was never very clear, nor his conviction of sin ever very deep, nor his sense of need of a Saviour ever very pungent; but still his views were sufficiently correct, sustained as they were by a good moral character, to gain him access to the fellowship of the church, and the table of the Lord. The object of his solicitude having been gained, he soon loses what little real solicitude he once possessed, and though he does not abandon the forms of godliness, is evidently a stranger to its power. He is perhaps engaged in a prosperous trade, the profits of which accumulate, and enable him to command the elegances and luxuries of fashionable life, or at any rate, substantial comforts. He is now taken up almost exclusively with business

and worldly enjoyment. All spirituality has evaporated from his mind: religion has ceased to be to him the source of personal enjoyment, the fount of real bliss, an object of experimental interest with him. Private prayer is given up, or confined to a few hurried and heartless expressions uttered on his retiring to rest, or rising hastily from it. As to communion with God, if he ever knew it, he has lost it. His family prayers are irregular, formal, or totally relinquished. His children are brought up almost without any care or anxiety for the formation of their religious character, for he has married a woman without decided religion, and who is one with him in all his worldly habits. There is taste, elegance, fashion, amusement, in his house, but the stranger who visits him, neither sees nor hears any thing of religion. His parties and entertainments are very gay. On the Sabbath he goes regularly once, perhaps twice, to public worship; that is, his body is there, for his thoughts are on his business, his wealth, or his pleasure. The prayers do not kindle devotion, the sermon yields him no religious enjoyment. To ordinary religious truth, however rich and full the exhibition of fundamental gospel doctrine, he is quite insensible, though upon an extraordinary display of pulpit eloquence, by some gifted preacher, he bestows both attention and eulogium. He is an admirer of talent, and is gratified by its displays. He is found also at the Lord's table, but though Jesus Christ is there evidently set forth, crucified before him, his heart never melts with penitence, nor glows with love, nor experiences the peace of believing. As to the weekly meetings for prayer or preaching, they have been entirely given up;

nor does he take any interest in the affairs of the church, or the usefulness and comfort of the pastor. His love of the world, unsubdued by faith, makes him in his business, sharp, eager, over-reaching, so as to compel others to complain of him, suspect him, and reproach him. In his temper, he is perhaps passionate, implacable, and litigious. Yet all this while he is a professor of religion, a member of a Christian church, and known to be such. He does not cast off his religion, or rather his profession of it, but he retains it only to dishonour it. Now this is lukewarmness, and it is a representation which, in various degrees, suits thousands and thousands of the members of all denominations in the present day. Such members are to be found in all our churches, corrupting their neighbours, grieving the pastor, discrediting religion, deceiving themselves, and offending Christ. There may not be in them any foul blots, great scandals, or grievous falls, calling for excommunication; such but rarely occur, and are not after all the chief source of discredit to religion, and of hindrance to its extension; it is lukewarmness, that sloth-like vice, which deteriorates its nature, degrades its dignity, renders it a low and reptile thing, and by its extensive prevalence, not only destroys the souls of those who are subject to it, but spreads the odious infection far and wide.

And what renders it the more alarming is, that the lukewarm are not sufficiently, or not at all, aware of their own destitute and miserable condition. Having dwelt on this in considering the state of the church at Sardis, which very nearly resembles that of Laodicea, it is unnecessary to enlarge upon it here.

Having thus briefly commented on these instructive and impressive addresses, I would once more, before I proceed in the task which I have undertaken, with all the earnestness I can express, commend the perusal of them to the churches of our day. In no part of Scripture shall we find a clearer statement of what, as regards the spiritual condition of a church, Christ requires of his people. Nowhere shall we find a more correct standard by which to examine our condition, or a more intelligible rule by which to guide our conduct. If in the epistles of Paul, Peter, and James, and in the other epistles of John, we find a more expanded view of Christian doctrine and morality, we find here, more than in almost any other part of the Word of God, of that which turns our attention inward upon the state of spiritual life in the church. Here are disclosed to us those heart-diseases, so to speak, which may be impairing the health, and imperilling the very life of a Christian community, and carrying on the work of destruction almost without being suspected. No part of the Word of God deserves more of the attention of the pastorate of this day, than this which we have been now considering. No minister can do a better service to his church, and to his age, than by an able, faithful, and practical exposition of these important addresses. By God's blessing upon such a service, the church must be the better for it, when well and diligently performed. Nor should it be felt as an objection to such a labour, that the other parts of this mysterious book are not yet clearly understood, and that an exposition of this part of it alone would be only fragmentary. It may be answered, that these letters are each complete in itself, as much

so as Paul's epistles, and that each furnishes lessons distinct, separate, and important. They contain instructions of momentous consequence, which may be understood, though the seals, vials, and trumpets, now covered with a cloud of hieroglyphics which perhaps nothing but futurity will ever disclose, should remain unintelligible to the most sagacious expositor. To explore this rich vein of divine truth requires no great skill in spiritual mining. No surer or better method can be taken to obtain an earnest church, than a general disposition in ministers to endeavour to fix the attention of their flocks upon these epistles to the seven congregations which were in Asia Minor.

CHAPTER III.

EARNESTNESS IN REFERENCE TO PERSONAL RELIGION.

The first and most important concern of the church of Christ is its own internal spiritual condition. Its care and solicitude must commence with laborious efforts for its own improvement. It must turn its cares inwards upon its own state, before it seeks to employ itself for the good of others. As God's instrument for the conversion of the world, it must be fitted for its work, and become a vessel fit for the Master's use. Its zeal must not be a thing separate from its piety, but a part of it: not even a foreign graft upon the stock, but a branch growing out of it, the putting forth of its own living principle, and an activity sustained by its own internal vigour. Any other zeal will neither live long, nor be very successful while it lives; it will be an excrescence or a parasite. The church cannot be an earnest one, in the true sense of the term, without being in a high, or at least in a healthy, state of spiritual religion within itself.

The more active it is in the way of proselyting, the more devoted it should be in the way of piety. Without this, even the present missionary ardour, instead of being as the light-house of the world, will be but as a bonfire upon the heights of Zion; which, however the

friends of missions may gather around it with admiration and delight, will prove but a transient blaze. Here then must be our starting point; to begin any where else is to begin in the middle. It is one of Satan's deep devices to call off the attention of the church from its own state, to the condition of the world without and around her. He cares but little for the efforts of a feeble church, or a lukewarm mind. He fears more from the attacks of a single troop of determined heroes, than from an army of timid, half-hearted, and untrained conscripts. We must take care therefore, not to look away from ourselves. Ministers must be watchful over their churches to keep up intense piety within them, and the churches must enter into this design of their pastors. The army that would invade and conquer the world, must itself be in a good state of discipline, courage, arms, and personal health.

I bring forward the remark I have already applied to the work of bearing testimony, and of evangelization, to apply it to the subject of this chapter; and it is a remark of so much importance, and so liable to be forgotten, that it will be kept before the reader through the whole of this volume. There are some views so important, that in reference to them tautology is not only justifiable, but an excellence, and this is one of them. The earnest piety of the church consists of the earnest personal piety of its members, and that of the power and duty of each individual Christian. No delusion is more common, both in civil and sacred things, than for membership to weaken the sense of responsibility, and even to cause oblivion of personal duty. There can be joint action, but no joint piety or conscience. There are many things which cannot be

carried without the co-operation of many, but religion is not of this number. All its obligations, all its duties, all its privileges, with the exception of the duties of social worship, are those of each individual man. The piety of a community is made up of the piety of its individual members: there being just as much religion in the whole as there is in all its separate parts, and no more. But we forget this. We talk of the religion of the church, the duty of the church, forgetting that this means our individual duty, our personal religion. What I mean then, in this volume, is the intense devotion, the spiritual earnestness, of each professing Christian: and what I aim at is to prevent each individual from looking away from himself to the body of which he is a member, and to compel him to look upon himself. Whatever is required in the way of more consecration to God, is required of you, each one of you, who shall read these pages. Do not satisfy yourself by thinking or saying that the church must be in earnest; but say to yourself, "I must be in earnest, for I am a part of the church." It is another of Satan's deep devices to keep the eye and the mind of individual members turned away from themselves, and fixed upon the body. He will allow us to utter what lamentations, and to make what resolutions we please concerning the whole, as long as we keep from regarding ourselves as parts of that whole body. It is individuals he fears, more than the church.

Our idea of the nature of earnest individual piety, must be taken, not from the conventional standard of the age, but from the Word of God. It is of immense importance to admit and bear in recollection the truth of this. It must be true, whether we admit it or no. Once give up the Bible as the only true

standard of personal religion, and there is no rule left but custom, which is ever varying with the opinions and corruptions of the times. On this principle even the very lowest stages of general apostacy may be justified, for they were the conventional notions of their day. No, the Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of Christians. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not, (and act not,) according to them, it is because there is no light in them." Yet how prevalent is the disposition to conform ourselves to the prevailing religion of the day and of the church to which we belong, and to satisfy ourselves with the average measure of piety around us! "I am as good as my neighbours," is the shield with which many a man repels the charge of his defects. "I am as good as my fellow-members," is the self-same shield with which many a professor of religion wards off the allegation of his being below his duty. The very same conventionalism which ruins the world, corrupts the church. That which keeps down the standard of morality in the one, depresses the standard of piety in the other. This has been the fatal practical error of the church through every age of its existence, by which its beauty has been disfigured, its power weakened, and its usefulness impeded: its members, instead of looking into the perfect law of Scripture, and seeing themselves reflected from that faithful mirror, and adjusting their character and conduct by its infallible revelations, placed before themselves the glass of the Christian profession as it was found in the church of the day, and regulated their behaviour by what they saw in the prevailing character of their fellow-Christians. Thus a constant multiplication of corrupted copies has ever been going on, and religion, as seen in the conduct

of its professors, and as described in the pages of its own inspired rule, have been quite different things. Hence the necessity of occasionally bringing under review, in a condensed form, the testimony of Scripture on the nature of earnest religion.

I. What then says the Bible in answer to the question, "What is earnest piety?"

Perhaps after what has been said in my remarks upon the epistles to the seven churches in Asia, this is almost unnecessary: but the scattered illustrations presented in those beautiful addresses, may be brought into a collected form, and if that does not show at once the nature and necessity of earnestness in religion, nothing can.

1. Consider the general design of religion, so far as man is concerned: how this is summed up in that one word, salvation; the salvation of the soul, the great salvation, the common salvation, the salvation of man's immortal soul from sin, from death, from hell, to pardon, holiness, peace, and heaven, and all this for eternity. What a word! Salvation! What ideas, heaven, hell, eternity! Eternal existence, with everything that can make that existence happy. This is our condition; life is a probation and a discipline for eternity. We are here to obtain salvation, to enjoy its first-fruits, and to meeten for the full possession of it. And now just glance at the state of mind which the Scripture enjoins on those who are pursuing this salvation, in reference to it. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," that is, let it be the object of your most intense desire, your most eager, constant, and persevering pursuit, so that everything else shall be brought into subordination to it. "We look not at the things which

are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," that is, "Our eye is constantly upon eternity. We see all things in their relations to this, and can scarcely see anything else. We regulate all our conduct by a regard to eternity. We are so little affected by temporal things that they seem scarcely to exist, while heavenly and eternal things seem to be the only realities." This is earnestness.

2. Consider the scriptural representation of the various branches of true religion.

Take piety towards God.

Religion in man, who is a sinner, must of course include conviction of sin, true penitence, and ingenuous confession: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." What an expression, a broken heart! how comprehensive, how emphatic! What a sense of sin is included in that one striking phrase, "a broken heart!"

What a conspicuous place in religion does faith bear. How it runs through the whole texture of the New Testament, as the silken cord which binds together all parts of our religion! "We are justified by faith, we live by faith, we walk by faith." Now faith is not mere opinion, a mere hearsay assent, an hereditary or educational notion; but a conviction, a mental grasp, a martyr's hold, upon the gospel of salvation; a living upon Christ, upon heaven, and for eternity.

Then there is love: not loving in word only, but in deed and in truth. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." "The love of Christ constraineth us:" that is, bears us away with the force of a torrent. What

an intensity of emotion do these words imply! A love that fills up all the intellect, and all the heart, and all the life.

Faith, where it is real, brings peace and joy; for if there is no peace, there can be no faith, and there will be as much peace as there is of faith; hence we read, that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace; even peace that passes understanding, a joy unspeakable and full of glory: a joy which continues even when we are in manifold trials.

True religion inspires an ardour of devotion. How intense were the breathings of the Psalmist's soul after God! How his heart seems to glow, burn, and melt with devotion! And the apostle also, in describing our duty, says, "We are to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

The piety of the New Testament necessarily induces deep-toned spirituality. "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." By this we are to understand a spontaneous, prevailing, and delightful propensity to meditate on divine truth and holy things. And allied to this is heavenly-mindedness, or an habitual tendency to dwell on the glory to be revealed. We are "to be risen with Christ," and to "seek those things which are above; setting our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;" we are to be waiting for the Son of God from heaven, and to be looking for his coming as our blessed hope, above all other hopes. This waiting for Christ was in an eminent degree characteristic of the primitive Christians; it is frequently mentioned by the apostles, and seems to have been a prevailing feeling of the churches: and all earnest Christians now have the same spirit. The

bride, the Lamb's wife, is and must be supposed to be, ever looking for the return of the heavenly Bridegroom. The want of this habitual looking for the return of Christ indicates a low state of piety, a prevalence of worldly-mindedness among professing Christians.

True religion includes a subjugation of the world; "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." How strong an expression, "Ye are dead!" Dead to sin, dead to the world, to things seen and temporal.

There is in the Lord's people a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Consider how craving an appetite is hungering after food, and thirsting after water. So we are to long and pant for holiness.

If there be earnest piety, there must of necessity be a spirit of prayer. We are to be "instant in prayer," "to pray always," "to pray always with all prayer," to be importunate in prayer, to enter into our closet, to pray with the family, and to join in public prayer. Our whole life is to be in one sense, one continued devotional exercise.

Religion implies habitual, minute, and anxious conscientiousness. Having in all things "a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man," and "avoiding even the appearance of evil."

Earnest piety requires a constant, diligent, and spiritual attendance upon all the prescribed means of grace, the holy observance of the Sabbath, assembling for public worship, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the devout reading of the Word of God.

To sum up all, if we are fervent in spirit, serving the

Lord, we shall endeavour to comply with the apostle's exhortation, where he says, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And we shall copy his example in that description of his end of life, where he says, "For me to live is Christ."

But there is another branch of true religion. God has taken under his protection, sanction, and enforcement all the interests of our fellow-creatures: and it is therefore as much a part of our business to promote them, as it is to practise the duties of piety towards God.

How large and prominent a place does charity or love, bear in our Christian obligations! "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things." How beautiful but how difficult a virtue! This is what our Lord enjoins where he commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves: a disposition which means that we are to do nothing to occasion the misery, and every thing to promote the happiness, of our fellow-creatures.

As a branch of this we are to be merciful, tender-hearted, sympathizing, and full of compassion in practice. Nor are we to stop here, but are to follow "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." So that the most refined morality is a necessary part of true religion.

If we are earnest in religion, we shall aim to let its

power regulate, and its beauty adorn, all our social relationships, so that all that we have to do in the state, or in the family, may be performed under its influence.

And because motives have much to do with actions, and contain all morality; and because thoughts and feelings are the seeds of actions, a man who is earnest in religion will pay most assiduous attention to the state of his mind: will watch his heart with all diligence; will often scrutinize his soul, and will crucify the affections and lusts of his corrupt nature.

Nor may he stop here, for knowing his own weakness, he must pray, wrestle, and agonize, for the power of the Spirit to help his infirmities. He must have grace, or he will fall. Hence he prays in faith for the aid without which he cannot take a step, and will gladly place himself under the teaching and guidance of this ever-present, all-sufficient Agent.

Such is a condensed view of the Scripture account of true religion. If any thing more than this were required to set forth the necessity of earnestness, I might refer to the figures under which the divine life is exhibited in the Word of God. It is a race; what preparation, what laying aside of encumbrances, what intense solicitude, and what strenuous exertion are here implied! It is a conflict, a fight of faith; what anxiety, what peril, what skill, what courage, what struggling, are included in the strife of the battle-field! It is a wayfare; what self-denial, what perseverance, what labour, are required for such a journey!

It is impossible not to be struck in reading such an account, with the idea that something more is there than a round of ceremonies, a course of physical exertion, a routine of mechanical action. This is not a

mere repetition of prayers, a counting of beads, and a holding of vigils, which are all mere bodily service; what is here laid down is a reasonable service, a course of action for the intellect, the will, the heart, the conscience; all the more difficult for being mental, and calling for reflection, determination, resolute purpose, and resistance of opposition.

This, be it recollected, is not what man has devised, but what God has prescribed. It is not what ministers have determined, but what God has set before us. Whether we like it or not, every particular of it is drawn from the Bible. We may complain of it as being too strict, but that must be settled with God, since it is no stricter than he has thought fit to make it. Let us read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. Let us set it before us. Let us turn away from the religion we see in the church, to the religion we read in the Bible. Let us not listen to what man says is necessary, but to what God says is necessary. Let us go for information not to the imperfect and blurred copy in the ordinary profession, but to the perfect and unspotted original.

II. A question, however, will now suggest itself to some minds, "Is this our standard? Is this representation of the nature of true piety intended for us as our guide, and is it obligatory upon us?" Strange that such a question should be asked. Is the Bible ours, and given for us, and are its contents binding upon us, as they were on those who first received it from the hand of God? Who among professing Christians ever doubted it, except some few modern semi-infidels, who tell us the Bible was a very good book, and Jesus Christ a very good teacher for the earlier times of Christianity; but that in the progress of reason, and the

advance of science and civilization, both may be dispensed with. But we have not so learned Christ. We profess to believe that the inspired volume, like its Divine Author, is, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:" unalterable in its meaning, in its adaptation, in its authority. The Scriptures were written for all times, and all countries, and are alike obligatory upon all. We are as much bound by Paul's epistles as were the churches to which they were originally addressed. There, in those blessed pages, is the description of our religion, both in its privileges and its duties. Great efforts are now being made to substitute something else for it, but they will prove abortive. It is too spiritual, too devout, too unearthly, too self-denying, too humbling, for many; and it must therefore by them be pushed aside for man's device; and this is done in two ways, and by two different classes of teachers. One class are endeavouring to set aside the instruction of the New Testament by a philosophized Christianity, which retains the name, but repudiates every thing besides, of that divine system. This is intended for the thoughtful and scientific, who cannot quite do without some reference to God and immortality, but cannot endure any thing so humbling to reason, and so mortifying to depravity, as the New Testament description of religion. On the other hand, there are men governed by their senses and their imagination, for whom all that we set forth is too spiritual, intellectual, and moral; and they, therefore, must have a ceremonial and ritual piety. They must dwell in the regions of poetry, and architecture, and sculpture; and be regaled by sights and sounds which will supply them with the luxuries of taste without any very large demand upon

their understandings, wills, hearts, or consciences; against both these the Word of God lifts up its own inspired, unalterable, and infallible standard, and with the authority of a Divine voice says, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Yes, all which we find in the Scriptures of the New Testament as descriptive of the religion of Jesus Christ, is obligatory upon us. Every particular enumerated is binding upon every individual Christian. There can be no dividing the religion of the Bible; no parcelling it out amidst various individuals; no giving piety to one, and morality to another; no leaving one man to do this to the neglect of that; and allowing another man to do what his fellow-professor has neglected, and to neglect what he has done; all is binding upon each. The whole moral law, and the whole gospel of the grace of God, come down with undiminished and undivided weight upon each man's conscience.

Nor is it enough to say, "Who then can be saved?" and to endeavour to get rid of our obligations by affirming that such a life as this is impossible to any one in this world. This has been often said, and an infidel objection has been raised against the gospel, on the ground of its high standard of duty. It has been alleged against it, that its requirements are beyond the reach of any one situated as we are, with a corrupt nature, and surrounded by temptations. There would be some force in this if nothing were accepted short of absolute perfection. Difficult, indeed, it is, so much so, that even "the righteous are scarcely saved." But is it more difficult for us, than it was for the first Christians? They were surrounded by idolatrous friends customs and rites, and had to force their way to heaven

through bonds imprisonment and death, in addition to all that is trying to us. They could not move a step in their religious course without encountering antagonism of which we can form no conception. Yet even to them no concession was made; "Deny thyself, and take up thy cross, and follow me," was the stern, unbending demand of Christ. He required of them, and he requires of us also, as the terms of discipleship, the double crucifixion of the outer and the inner man.

This, I admit, is somewhat alarming: it is indeed startling enough to awaken all the dwellers in Christendom to very serious consideration, to be told that this is the religion they must have, or abandon their pretension to religion altogether. Can any thing more clearly prove the necessity of earnestness than such a statement as this?

III. I may now proceed to ask, whether this is the religion which is prevalent in our day, and among us? This is a question which I approach with trembling solicitude, anxious not to give a wrong answer, neither on the one hand to exaggerate, nor on the other, to under-rate, the piety of this age. Recollect the question is not whether we have more or less earnest piety than some former ages. No doubt there have been times when there was more intense devotion than ours, and other times when there was less. There cannot be a question that the number of true Christians is greater now than it has been in any modern age, and as little, that in some directions, this number is still greatly augmenting. I am disposed therefore to drop this inquiry, and to take up the question of the present state of piety as viewed only in comparison with the standard laid down before. Even could it be shown that we were

somewhat more in earnest than others that have gone before us, yet how far short we are, both of what the Word of God requires, and of what is necessary for our high duty and destiny, as God's witnessing and proselyting church!

I would not lose sight, and ought not to do so, of some distinguishing and lofty features in the church's piety of this day. There is no doubt a very prevailing disposition to profess Christ. Religion is unquestionably gaining ground in this respect. Whatever disposition there may be in some quarters (that is among the second-rate men of science, and also among great numbers of the operative classes), to espouse the cause of infidelity, and a fearful disposition there is to do so, public opinion is in other quarters conciliated to religion, and even to evangelical religion. But I am not now thinking of the characteristics so much of the age, as of the church: and of this latter, I find a noble distinction in its liberal, yea munificent activity. Never, no never, since the days of the apostles, was there such a pervading spirit of religious zeal as there is now: nor would I be over curious and severe in my scrutiny to ascertain how much of this is tainted with sectarianism: that it is not all pure, I admit; but whatever alloy may be mixed with it, much of it is genuine gold. It is a sight for the admiration of angels, and on which the great God himself looks down with ineffable complacency, to see the church rising up from the slumber of ages, multiplying her instruments, and accumulating her means, for the world's conversion. I exultingly say, "Behold her efforts at home in the building churches, training ministers, erecting schools, preaching of the gospel, and educating the people: and see her at the

same time, on both sides of the Atlantic, stretching out her arms half-round the globe, and by her missionaries and mission-stations, giving the blessings of salvation to half the teeming population of our earth. We should not be blind to this, for it is a glorious sight to see our merchants beginning to inscribe upon their merchandize, and upon the bells of the horses, "Holiness to the Lord." If some of the friends of Zion, who departed to their rest a century ago, could look out of their graves upon the scenes exhibited in the metropolis in the month of May, they would be almost ready to conclude we had reached the millennial period of the world's history. Zeal is at length recognized as one of the constituent elements of piety, and that professor would be viewed as a relic of a by-gone age, who did not recognize his commission in the command of the Saviour, to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

This is delightful, but it is not every thing: there may be, as we have seen, a name to live, while we are dead. It is impossible to be ignorant, or to forget, how much of all the money given, may be bestowed without any real love to the object; and how much of all the labour employed may be carried on from the mere love of activity, and under the strong current of public example. It is only necessary to look to the church of Rome, to learn how much zeal may be manifested, and how much property may be expended, without any pure religious motive. And even taking the gross amount of what is given and what is done, without making any deductions for the counterfeit coin of false motives, how little does it amount to, compared with what we spend

upon ourselves, and with what the cause of Christ requires at our hands!

Giving, then, all that is due to this spirit of liberality and activity, let us come back to the question about the earnest piety of the age. Has the church so clothed herself with the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness, and does she so shine with the beauties of holiness, and the reflected light of heaven falling upon her, as to attract the notice, to fix the attention, and excite the admiration of the world? Is she all brightness, a Goshen amidst Egyptian gloom, a verdant oasis in the midst of this moral desert? Has she by her unearthly temper, her consistent holiness, her heavenly-mindedness; by her exalted morality, her exemplary benevolence, by the radiance of truth sparkling in her eye, the spirit of love breathed from her lips, and the blessings of mercy dropping from her hands, silenced the cavils of infidelity, and answered the taunting question of her enemies, "What do ye more than others?" Does she appear like the tabernacle of God, filled with his glory, and indicating his presence? Have Christians, by their victory over the world, their constant and earnest pursuit of salvation, their consistent piety, their general excellence, their gentleness, meekness, and kindness, lived down the suspicion, and silenced the charge, of hypocrisy? Do we appear what we profess to be, as men living supremely for immortality, and bearing, visibly to every eye, the stamp of heaven and eternity upon our character? Do we look like competitors for a crown of glory, warriors fighting for eternal liberty and life? Does our religion appear like that which is making us saints in life, and would

make us martyrs in death? Can we pretend to be in earnest, if these questions must be answered in the negative?

If asked to point out the specific and prevailing sin of the church in the present day, I cannot hesitate to reply, a prevailing worldliness of mind, heart, and conduct. She is fearfully secularized in the spirit and temper of her members. The love of the world is become the master-passion, before which other and holier affections have grown dim and weak. Nor is this at all inconsistent with the spirit of liberality which I have already admitted to exist. There may, by the force of circumstances, be a spirit of giving in persons, in whom, at the same time, there is an excessive anxiety about getting money. In this commercial country, it is difficult, even for professors of religion, to escape the contagious spirit of speculation, eager competition, and over-trading. The determination, as well as the anxiety, to be rich, will without great watchfulness rush into the church; it has done so, and those who profess to have overcome the world by faith, appear almost as eager as others, in all schemes for getting wealth in haste, and by almost any means. But it is not only in the way of doing business that this secular spirit is seen, but in the general habits and tastes of professing Christians. Their style of living, their entertainments, their associations, their amusements, their conversation, evince a conformity to the world, a minding of earthly things, a disposition to adapt themselves to the world around, and an apparent desire to seek their happiness from objects of sense, rather than from those of faith, which prove the extent to which a secular spirit is bearing down the spirit of piety.

It may not be improper here to ask, what are the principal defects, as well as sins, of the religion of this day; in what is it that the professors of this age chiefly fall short? Two only shall be enumerated as perhaps the most prominent. I may first mention that class of duties which come under the head of the devotional, spiritual, and contemplative, as distinguished from the active and practical, or those which are specifically known as piety towards God: the love of, and communion with, him; looking to Jesus, and an habitual sense of his unutterable preciousness; commerce with the skies; an abiding impression of eternity; an impressive sense of the Divine presence; that constant reference to the future state, which, like an invisible and powerful link, connects us with another world. This is what we want, the high-toned spirituality, the deeply devotional spirit, the heavenly aspirations, the yearnings after a higher and holier state of existence, which are exhibited in many of the hymns we sing, many of the biographies we read, and many of the sermons we hear. We have a faith which converses with the letter, but we want one which presses onwards to the spirit, of the word of God: our faith stops in words, but does not reach on to things; the awfully glorious form of truth passes before our intellect, but it is veiled and muffled; we do not take hold of her garment, and entreat her to smile upon us, and tarry with us, and admit our hearts to communion with her.

It has sometimes occurred to me that we have suffered our very orthodoxy in one respect to do us harm, as if the doctrine of justification by faith, that fundamental truth, and only legitimate source of peace to the sinner's conscience, were intended to chill

the affections, and extinguish the exercise of a holy and chastened imagination in the soul of the saint. In setting aside frames of mind and feelings as grounds of hope and sources of peace, we have been in danger of extinguishing them altogether as exercises of devotion. In doing honour to the work of Christ as the sole ground of acceptance with God, we have neglected the work of the Spirit to raise us into the element of light and love. In turning with aversion from the crucifix as an aid to devotion, we have neglected to use the cross so as to produce in ourselves the legitimate emotions of earnest contemplation. In refusing to enter the cloister, we have neglected also the closet. In repudiating the visions, raptures, and dreamy silence of the mystics, we have also let go the peace that passes understanding, the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. In surrendering such books as Madame Guion's rapturous Hymns, Mrs Rowe's Devout Exercises of the Heart, Hervey's Meditations, and Law's Serious Call, we have at the same time renounced almost all other works, which though of a more sober spirit of devotion, are intended and calculated to excite and sustain religious affection. We have repudiated manuals of devotion, which prescribe employments for passion week, a whole week's preparation for the Lord's supper, prayers to be repeated in dressing and undressing, and in all the various situations in which we can be found, as tending to make religion a thing of and by itself, as belonging to times and places, but not constituting an element of habitual character, and a principle designed to influence us always, every where, and in every thing: but have we not too much abandoned all aids to devo-

tion, all means and helps to keep up the piety of the heart towards God? Missals, breviaries, and rosaries, are abjured by us as the inventions of man, the devices of superstition, the mockeries of devotion; but do we replace them by Bibles, hymn-books, and religious biographies, as closet companions, as fuel for the flame of devotion? We doubt the genuineness of that emotion which can be excited only by Gothic architecture, beautiful sculpture, sublime music, and mouldering ruins of religious fabrics; but do we take pains to nourish devotion by the appeals made to our senses in the scenes of nature, and the legitimate symbols of our holy religion? In short, we have abjured Popery, and its late-born child, Puseyism; but we still want the devotion of some of the best of their votaries, purified from its superstition, illuminated and guided by the clear light of the evangelical system of revealed truth, the piety of Fenelon and Pascal, as a graft upon the doctrine of justification by faith; or rather, yielded by it as its legitimate produce. Such instances there are among us, not a few; would God they were more numerous!

But, "this kind goeth not forth but by fasting and prayer," and in the former of these, if not in the latter, the Christians of the present day are singularly wanting. We live in a busy age, when men find little time for private prayer, reading the Scriptures, and meditation. Perhaps there was never so little private prayer among professors as there is now. The closet was never more neglected by the great bulk of those who call themselves Christians. A few hasty expressions or a few broken thoughts, poured out without solemnity or without coherence, or else a short form learnt by heart, and

repeated at night or morning, or perhaps both, constitutes, it is to be feared, as we have already said, all the private prayer which some offer to God. Closet prayer means a person's selecting some suitable time and place to be alone with God, to pour out into his ear with freedom and enlargement, all the cares, the sorrows, the desires, and the sins of a burdened heart and a troubled conscience: it means more, for it signifies the act of a child going to commune in the spirit of adoption with his Divine Parent, to give utterance to the expressions of his adoring gratitude, praise, and love, and to present his intercessions for all that claim an interest in his supplications. It is but too obvious that there is comparatively little of such closet exercises in this day of engrossing worldliness. Christians live too much in public to be much in their closets. Answer, ye who read these pages, is it not so? What say your closets and consciences? What testimony is borne for you? Say, professors, say, if you are not restraining prayer, and framing all kinds of excuses for the neglect. What spirituality, what heavenly-mindedness, can you expect in the habitual neglect of the closet?

But this is not the only deficiency of the church in the present day, for the want of a prevailing conscientiousness is as conspicuous as that on which we have just dwelt. Earnestness in religion is as much displayed in sincere and anxious desire in all things to do what is right, as it is in praying and cultivating the spirit of devotion. And this is, perhaps, much easier to be manifested than the other. There are great numbers of God's people who are so circumstanced that they cannot command much time for devotional

exercises, their hours are not their own; but every one can be conscientious in his conduct. It requires no more time, though in some cases much more resolution, to do right, than to do wrong. In a trading country like ours, where competition is so keen, and success so precarious, the temptations to a violation of the "whatsoever things are just, honest, true, and lovely," will be very numerous, very strong, and constantly recurring. Trade affords constant tests of principle. It supplies the standard of honour with men of business. But dishonourable transactions are no uncommon occurrences among professors of the present day. More scandals are brought upon the cause of Christ from this source, than from any other that could be named. A want of strict and eminent integrity is so common, that the manifestation of it in any high degree, excites admiration, and ensures for its possessor unusual testimonies of commendation.

It is not meant by this to avow or insinuate that almost all professors are dishonest men, but merely that in little affairs of a pecuniary nature, and other matters, violations of what is honourable and generous are so common in those who profess to be in earnest for the kingdom of God, as to excite less surprise and censure than they should do. What Paley said in reference to subscription to articles of faith, "that he could not afford to keep a conscience," is said by multitudes besides, or if not said is acted upon in reference to other matters. A man, who, in all his actions, words, and feelings; in all those parts of his conduct which are seen only by God, as well as in those which come under the cognizance of men; who, when

it exposes him to inconvenience and loss, as well as when it puts him to no cost and calls for no shame, makes an enlightened and tender conscience his guide, and implicitly obeys it, is a character too rare even among professors of religion. To adopt as the rule of conduct this resolution, "I will in all things do that which my Bible and my conscience tell me is right;" and to carry this rule into all the great branches and the minute ramifications of Christian duty; to adopt it in reference to our temper and spirit, our thoughts and feelings, as well as our words and actions; to make it govern us in all our social relations, and all our business transactions; and in conformity to this rule to make any sacrifice, to practise any self-denial, and to endure any loss, is a line of conduct, which, though imperatively demanded by religion, is but too seldom seen, but whenever it is seen can never fail to be admired.

It appears quite clear then, that great numbers of Christian professors are but very imperfectly acquainted with the requirements of "pure and undefiled religion," and need to be led to re-study it in the pages of Holy Scripture. We have lost sight of the divine Original, and have confined our attention to the imperfect transcripts which we find on every hand. We have by tacit consent reduced the standard, and fixed our eye and our aim upon a meaner object. We are a law to each other, instead of making the Word of God the law to us all. We tolerate a worldly-minded, diluted, and weakened piety in others, because we expect a similar toleration for ourselves. We make excuses for them, because we expect the like excuses

for our own conduct in return. Instead of "seeking to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God," we have abused, shamefully abused, the fact that there is no perfection upon earth, and converted it into a license for any measure and any number of imperfections. Our highest notion of religion requires only abstinence from immorality and the more polluting worldly amusements; an attendance upon an evangelical ministry; and an approval of orthodox doctrine; this, with the act of joining a Christian church, participation in the Lord's supper, and a little occasional emotion under a sermon and a hasty prayer, night and morning; this this, is the religion of multitudes. There may be no habitual spirituality or heavenly-mindedness; no life of faith and communion with God; no struggling against sin, Satan, and the world; no anxiety to grow in grace; no supreme regard to eternity; no studied and advancing meetness for the eternal world; no tenderness of conscience; no laborious discipline of our temper; no cultivation of love; no making religion our chief business and highest pleasure; no separation in spirit from the world, in short, no impress upon the whole mind, and heart, and conscience, and life, of the character of the Christian, as delineated upon the page of Scripture. We all need to be taken out of the religious world, as it is called, and collected again round the Bible to study what it is to be a Christian, as well as to be called one. Let us do this very thing. Let us endeavour to forget what the bulk of professors are, and begin afresh to learn what they ought to be. Let us select the most eminently holy,

devout, and conscientious Christians we can find; and if we know not many living ones who stand high above the rest, let us go to the memory of the departed ones, and say to ourselves, "Even these, distinguished as they were, did not come up to the standard of God's law; and admitting this, as they did, if they bewailed their deficiencies and their imperfections, then, what am I!" It is to be feared that we are corrupting each other, leading each other to be satisfied with a conventional piety. Many have been actually the worse for church membership. They were more intensely anxious and earnest before they came into fellowship, than they were afterwards. Their religion, in joining the communion of saints as they professed to be, seemed to come into an ice-house, instead of a hot house. They grew better in their former state than than in their new one. At first they were surprised and shocked to see the lukewarmness, the irregularities, the worldliness, the inconsistencies, of many older professors, and exclaimed, with grief and disappointment, "Is this the church of Christ?" After a while, a fatal influence came over them, and their piety sank to the temperature around them.

Let us then cast away the fatal opiate which so often quiets a troubled conscience, "I am as good as my neighbours," and go with prayer, trembling, and anxiety, to the Scriptures, with the question, "What is it to be a Christian?" No religion but an earnest one can be sincere; none but an earnest religion will take us to heaven; none but an earnest religion can be a happy one. Rouse, Christian professors, from your slumbers and your dreams. Multitudes of you are perishing in

your sins: you are going down to the pit with a lie in your right hands. Your profession alone will not save you, and it is all that some of you have to depend upon. There are millions of professors of religion in the bottomless pit, who while they lived brought no scandal upon religion by immorality; but the life of God was not in their souls, they had a name to live, but were dead; they looked around upon the low conventionalism of the day in which they lived, instead of studying the Bible for their standard of piety; and went to the bar of God, saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not been called by thy name?" and then they met with the dreadful rebuff and rejection, "I never knew you, depart from me."

CHAPTER IV.

EARNESTNESS DISPLAYED IN PERSONAL EXERTIONS FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

Patriotism is a part of religion, and he who is a true lover of God will be a genuine lover of his country also. It is true, the Bible knows nothing of national antipathies, but on the contrary, condemns the absurd and wicked prejudice which leads the people of one land to hate those of another, because they are under another government, talk another language, and are separated from them by a sea, a river, or a land-mark. Still there are grounds of affection, and motives for benevolent action, relating to our own country, which do not appertain to any other. One of these is contiguity. We are bound to do good to all men as opportunity shall present itself, and especially to those in our own vicinity. The people who are starving at the antipodes ought to receive our bounty as soon and as far as we can send it to them, but the man who has just dropped down in utter exhaustion and is dying at our door, has an especial claim upon us. We must care for the perishing heathen, but shall we forget perishing Englishmen? To the former we can send missionaries, to the latter we can go ourselves. This, then, is the subject of the present chapter, our obligation to individual earnestness in the way of direct action for the

conversion of souls. This must, of course, respect our countrymen, our neighbours, our families, our friends. Is such individual action necessary?

Look at the moral aspect of your country. It is now more than three centuries since the Reformation from Popery; almost two since the era of toleration; more than one since the revival of religion by the labours of Whitfield and Wesley; nearly seventy years since the setting up of Sunday-schools by Robert Raikes; fifty since the spread of evangelical religion in the church of England; forty-three since the establishment of the Bible Society, and a little more than that since the formation of the Religious Tract Society, and somewhat less since the invention and promulgation of the popular systems of education of Bell and Lancaster: to say nothing of the various institutions, such as home missionary societies, town missions, district visiting societies, and other organizations, which have since then been set up for improving the spiritual condition of the people. The Bible Society has issued twenty million copies of the Scriptures. The Tract Society has sent out nearly five hundred million copies of books and tracts: other institutions have added millions more of Bibles, tracts, and prayer-books. Churches, chapels, and schools, have been multiplied beyond all precedent in former times. And yet what is the moral condition of the people of England, of Protestant England, at this moment? The town in which I live contains, with its suburbs, nearly two hundred and ten thousand inhabitants, and of these perhaps not more than forty thousand above twelve years of age, are ever at public worship at the same time. Take from these all Roman Catholics, Unitarians, and other deno-

minations who do not hold evangelical sentiments, and what a small portion remains out of the whole population who are enjoying those soul-converting means of grace which stand so intimately connected with eternal salvation! Where are the remainder, and what is their state and character as regards eternity? This is but a specimen of other large towns, and of the state of the metropolis. What then, it may be asked, must be the spiritual condition of this land of Bibles, of sanctuaries, of ministers; this valley of vision, this land of light?

If, however, it were merely the paucity of means of doing good we had to complain of, it would be a matter of less grief and horror; but let any one think also of the agencies, instruments, and means of doing evil, which are in active operation. The demoralized condition of a large proportion of the people of this country is beyond the conception of those who have not enquired into the subject. All persons know the prevalence of drunkenness and sensuality, and most are impressed vaguely with the idea that there is a great deal of infidelity at work; but the depths of iniquity, the stagnant, pestiferous sinks of vice, which are ever sending forth their destructive miasmata into the moral atmosphere, and poisoning the souls of the people of these realms, are neither known nor conjectured by those who are ignorant of the statistics of the kingdom of darkness.

A writer to whom the religious public are much indebted, has lately published a work entitled, "The Power of the Press;" in which he has set forth a statement, derived from authentic sources, and sustained by unquestionable evidence, which is enough,

if anything can do it, to circulate a thrill of horror through the whole nation, and to rouse into activity every friend of his Bible, his country, and his God.

This indefatigable investigator informs us that 11,702,000 copies of absolutely vicious or Sabbath-breaking newspapers are annually circulated in these realms; while the issues of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Trinitarian Bible Society, the Coldstream Free Press Bible Society, and the grants of the Religious Tract Society, did not amount last year to one-third of this immense number!

"But a more fearful revelation still remains. There are about seventy cheap periodicals (varying in price from three half-pence to one half-penny) issued weekly; and supposing an extensively circulated series of popular works issued from Edinburgh, the tendency of which is believed by many to be injurious, are omitted, there remain at least sixty of a positively pernicious tendency. Of these the most innocent is one which has perhaps the largest circulation. It is said to issue 100,000 weekly. But though vicious principles are avowedly repudiated, yet a depraved and disordered imagination is fostered in this journal, by the introduction into its pages of French novels, and similar trash, as a principal feature. Then comes a less scrupulous paper, with a weekly issue of about 80,000: followed by six papers, all a degree lower in the scale of corruption, with an average weekly circulation of 20,000 each, or yearly sale for the six, of 6,240,000. And lastly comes a catalogue of intolerably polluting trash, which, closely examined, will make the Christian shudder at its contemplation; wondering where readers can be found, and amazed at the neglect and indifference of the church of Christ. The works thus alluded to, may be classified thus: 1st, infidel; 2nd, polluting. Of these two there are circulated a yearly average of 10,400,000.

But even beyond this dreadful limit, there is a very large annual circulation, into which the writer dare not enter, so awfully polluting is the character. In the last mentioned class, engravings and colourings are employed to excite the lowest passions. It is true, these last works are supposed to be sold by stealth, but they are easily procurable from the same sources as the papers and periodicals before mentioned. The vendors of the one generally procure the other;

moreover, the unstamped journals previously alluded to, usually contain advertisements of these works; and as the sale of these journals is large, they obtain a wide circulation for the filth, which, bad as they are themselves, they would profess to abominate.

"Now if we sum up the entire yearly circulation of the different kinds of popular, but manifestly pernicious literature, which has been passed in review before the reader, it will stand thus.

10 Stamped papers . . .	11,702,000
6 Unstamped papers . . .	6,240,000
About 60 miscellaneous papers .	10,400,000
Worst class	520,000
Being a Total of	28,862,000

"The effect of this immense annual issue, which if at all misstated, the writer believes to be considerably below the average, can scarcely be contemplated by the Christian for one moment, without producing, we repeat, a thrill of horror! Week after week, week after week, year after year, year after year, does this literature meet the mind which may have been for a few weeks or months, perhaps, under Christian control one day in seven; or it arrests the attention of those who have never been so privileged. The process and effect are alike in both cases, though in one results may be more gradual. The mental appetite exists, and must be fed; it meets with the food which we have just analyzed, at every turn, in every variety, to suit every taste."

What has been done (by the press) to meet this evil? Putting together the annual issues of Bibles, Testaments, religious tracts, newspapers, and periodicals, of every kind, we find a total of 24,418,620, leaving a balance of 4,443,380, in favour of pernicious and corrupting literature.*

Let it then be imagined, if imagined it can be, what

* As a supplement to this appalling statement, I may add that a few weeks since I received a copy of one of these low, cheap, infidel publications, containing strictures on "The Anxious Inquirer." The writer of these strictures avows himself an atheist; and indeed, he has done ample justice to his profession, by effusions of the most vulgar, blasphemous, and horrid atheism I ever read. But what was

must be the state of multitudes in this country, when nearly thirty millions of such pestiferous publications are annually going out among the masses of our population. Let the minds of all Christian people be fixed upon these facts. Let them dwell upon the insult offered to God, the ruin brought upon souls, the injury done to morals, and the mischief perpetrated in the nation, by such a state of things. Friends of Christ, lovers of your species, professors of religion, you must pause, and ponder these statements. You must not read and dismiss them, as you would statistics of political economy. The writer of these facts has led you to the very door of Satan's workshop, and has thrown open to you the scenes of that awful laboratory of mental poison. He has shown you authors, compositors, printers, engravers, publishers, booksellers, vendors, by myriads, all busy and indefatigable, to do what? To destroy the Bible, to pull down the cross, to dethrone God, to subvert religion, to uproot the church, to turn man into a thinking and speaking brute, and as a necessary consequence, to overturn all morality, to poison the springs of domestic happiness, to dissolve the ties of social order, and to involve our country in ruin. Is this so, or is it not? If it be, we are all, ministers and private Christians, summoned to ponder this awful state of things, and to ask what can be done to arrest this tide of ruin, this awful cataract of perdition, which is dashing over the precipice of infidelity into the gulf

most alarming was, there were announced on the cover of the magazine twelve places in London, where infidel meetings are held; and a list of subjects to be discussed, all intended to bring the Christian religion into contempt and derision. The publication alluded to was ostentatiously exhibited in the window of a shop in this town, where similar works are habitually sold.

of the bottomless pit, and precipitating millions of immortal souls into the boiling surges and tremendous whirlpools below. Hell, and all its emissaries upon earth, are in earnest in ruining men's souls, if the church is not in earnest in saving them.

But what is to be done, and who is to do it? Much, of course, is to be done by the pulpit, and it is never to be forgotten that the preaching of the gospel is God's great instrument for the conversion of souls. Nothing can ever supersede it. Towering above all other means, will the sacred desk and he that fills it, ever stand as God's chosen means for reclaiming to his Saviour, the wandering and lost soul of apostate man. No suspicion must come over the preacher or the hearer of the gospel, that the pulpit has had its day, and done its work, and should give place to something else. It will never have had its day, till the world has had its day. Pre-eminently adapted to man as man, through every period of his history, and every change of his condition, it will remain to the end of time, the great means for the sinner's conversion, and the saint's edification, sanctification, and consolation. And the infidel operations I have just referred to do but proclaim with trumpet-call the more urgent necessity of an earnest ministry.

The appalling activity in corrupting the public mind just related, must be met also by religious organizations, such as home missionary societies, and town and city missions, those admirable institutions for carrying light into the regions of darkness, and purity into the dens of filth. Churches and chapels, however numerous and well-supplied with ministers and preachers, will not entirely meet the case, since multitudes who most need the instructions of the pulpit, never come to receive

them. There are millions to whom the gospel must be carried, if they are ever to know any thing of it. Under the pressure of want, men will seek the food of their bodies with an eagerness proportioned to the cravings of hunger; but though perishing for the lack of the bread of life, they will take no pains to obtain it, for they are unconscious of their necessities. What is wanted, then, is the plan of domiciliary visitation, and appeals to the people in their own localities, carried out to a still wider extent, and by a still larger and more perfect organization. Shall we ever have well educated and devoted men, versed in all the popular systems of infidelity, fluent, eloquent, and bold, who will go upon a mission to the masses, and be able to conciliate them by kindness, and to convince them by argument, and thus to win them to Christ, and to his church? Our town missionaries and Scripture readers are doing great good, but we still want a class of agents above them in mental stature, who shall, by sound logic, scriptural knowledge, and commanding intellect, grapple with the demon of infidelity in its own domain.

The press also must be worked with still greater power and efficiency. If it has a power for evil, it has also a power for good. The pulpit cannot do every thing, (some think it cannot do much in this educated age and nation,) and at any rate, it is not jealous of the press as a rival, but invites its assistance as an auxiliary. The ministers of the sanctuary hail as coadjutors the priesthood of letters. The press must not be left, thank God it is not left, in the hands of the men of the world, and the motley crew of all grades of scepticism.

"Are they its friends? So are we. Are their liberties the offspring of its efforts? So are ours. Does it minister to their

idol-gods? And shall it not minister to the one living and true God? Let us, therefore, consecrate the press in the midst of our churches. Let some of our most talented ministers of the gospel, who are adapted to the work, (and have no gift of elocution) devote themselves entirely to teaching by the press. The world requires their services. Millions of minds can be reached only by means of the press."

The Religious Tract Society is doing wonders, and will do greater wonders yet: let it be well supported. Our journals and periodical literature, from the bulky Quarterly down to the Penny Magazine, are doing great things. Let them be liberally sustained. If infidels and immoral writers are pouring forth a deluge of scepticism and vice, let us send forth a higher and a more mighty flood, to sweep away by its force the turbid streams, in the waters of which nothing lives, and which are depositing a pernicious and pestiferous slime, instead of a fertile soil. Christians, support well the religious press; remunerate and encourage your editors, authors, and societies, by pushing to the widest possible extent their publications. Grudge not the money you spend in supporting the press, very little is better spent.

Still this, even this, all this, is not enough. Give to the pulpit all the power that is claimed for it; give to social organization all the efficiency that it may be supposed, and by God's blessing may be made, to possess; and add to this the well-directed energy of the press; we have an evil to contend with, so gigantic in its strength, so diffused in its influence on all sides of us, and so infectious and malignant in its efforts, that nothing short of the engagement, the energies, and the earnestness of the whole church can cope with it. The whole church must be employed for the conversion

of the whole country. The levy en masse must be called out. The enemy is coming in like a flood; infidelity and immorality are invading us; the tocsin must be rung; the beacon-fire must be kindled on every hill of Zion; the sound, "To arms, To arms," must arise from every tower and every battlement, and every man that can shoulder a musket, or bear a pike, must take the field, and array himself against the foe. There is not a single member of any church, male or female, young or old, rich or poor, but ought to be engaged in personal efforts for the salvation of souls. An army may as rationally leave the battle to be fought by the officers alone, as the church may leave the conversion of the world to the ministers of the gospel. It is a fundamental error, a practical heresy of most pernicious and deadly influence, to consider the conversion of souls as exclusively ministerial work. This is Popery and Puseyism, which would restrict the conveyance of renewing grace to the medium of priestly hands and sacramental channels. Against this, as an invasion of the rights of the Christian people, a robbery of the privileges of the "chosen generation," and a deposition of the "royal priesthood," the whole church of God ought to rise up in the attitude of firm resistance, and with the language of indignant protestation. The honour of saving souls, (and it is one of the brightest and richest that can light upon the head of mortal or immortal,) is as truly and as legitimately within the reach of the pious pauper in the workhouse, the godly child in a Sunday-school, or the religious maid-servant in a family, as within the grasp of the mitred prelate. The church, the whole church, and nothing less than the whole church, including members as well as minis-

ters, is the priesthood by which the work of conversion is to be carried on upon earth. The clergy-church, that is, a church consisting only of ministers apart from the people, is a figment, which may do well enough at Rome, or at Oxford, but will not do wherever the New Testament is possessed, read, and understood. This divine, heavenly Magna Charta of the Christian church must be held up, to wrest from the usurpation of tyrannizing ecclesiastics, the self-granted exclusive patent for saving souls: and as a divine right of the people, must be bestowed upon any one who has grace enough to claim it, and virtue enough to exercise it. Delightful and auspicious it is to see this admitted and put forward by authorities which will have weight with those who will not be swayed by the same statements coming from other quarters.

In the North British Review for November last, is a critique on a work by the Chevalier Bunsen, Prussian ambassador to the British court, entitled "The Church of the Future;" which is well worthy the attention of every thoughtful mind, though it contains many strange views: the following extract from it, with the comments of the Reviewer, bear upon my subject.

"But, in considering the assistance rendered to the pastors in the evangelical instruction and education of the people, we have met with a mighty institution, the only one of its kind, the 17,000 schoolmasters who stand at the side of the parochial clergy, and assist them in the congregation. That which is good and evangelical in the system of the clergy-church is still to be found in it, and new and vigorous shoots present themselves on every side, and manifest a life full of hope for the future. We found the most startling and important signs of this in the help afforded to the church in her care of the poor, the sick, and the prisoners. We were met by a zealous company of men and women, who had founded institutions of helpful love, for the reformation of those

who had gone astray, for the maintenance of homeless and orphan children, for the comfort of the sick and the prisoner: we were met by operatives full of faith, and by a holy band of deaconesses performing the works of the merciful sisters of the clergy-church, without vows, in the full freedom of the Gospel, and in the might of free, because thankful, love. Now every one who considers the way in which the diaconate first decayed and died, and how it is especially wanting in the clergy-church, because it requires for its free development the full communion of the laity, and the full acknowledgment of the universal priesthood, will readily comprehend the historical significance of the fact, that amongst the vigorous offshoots of the church-life of the present day, the diaconate is the most distinctly and gloriously prominent. This is the ministry of love, and in an especial manner the ministry of the Church of the Future. We may here behold coming to the birth the new element of that church of the future, whose birth-throes we all feel, of that free congregation of faithful men, to which the groaning of the creature, and the ever more fearful revelations of the misery of mankind, are pointing. Here is that ministry which is open to all; here is that approval of our faith to which every one is called; here is that exercise of the priesthood for which every constitution of the church gives liberty: here is that centre from which the constitution of this church of the future must proceed, if it is to be a partaker of an inward and spiritual life." Bunsen.

"All hail to such a church of the future! The world yearns for it, creation groans for it. Society is sick at heart, sick of sore maladies which politics can scarcely cure; sick of many empyrics and few physicians. And Christ's church alone has the panacea, the universal cure. Deacons and deaconesses, brothers and sisters of charity, with Christ's love in their hearts and no Pope's yoke on their necks; priests and priestesses, self-devoted to the High Priest's own work of going about to do good; such is the ministry, the age, the church, and the world all demand. Otherwise, churches are self-consuming; light and life go out in a cold vacuum. Pastors, elders, deacons, schoolmasters, people, eat in on themselves and on one another. Forms of polity and worship stand; rights of rule and rights of choice are balanced; but love dies, and with love all peace and joy. An earnest out-going ministry, in all who are the Lord's, in Dorcas as in Paul, is the grand want of the times. What church will realize this? That is the Church of the Future. Bunsen, Arnold, Vinet, Chalmers, all are one here. For, at the last, intellect humanity, piety, are always one."

Yes, this is all true, and just, and impressive; and thanks be rendered to God, for this loud call, and its many echoes through various countries, for the employment of a well qualified, well adapted, and well directed lay agency. We want the Christian people to come forth, and claim and exercise to the utmost their privilege, as God's priesthood, fully commissioned by the Divine Head of the Church, to evangelize the world.

The remainder of this chapter must now be devoted to a consideration of personal effort for the salvation of souls, viewed in the light of a duty. Yes, it is the duty of every one; not an individual can plead exemption. Is it not the duty of every one to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself? If so, does not this love demand that we should seek the conversion of souls? Can we pretend to love God, and not seek that others should love him too? Or can we love our neighbour, and not seek his salvation? Are not all Christians represented as the salt of the earth, and the light of the world? And can they answer to these impressive figurative representations of their duty and design, if they never attempt to diffuse by personal effort their holy religion? As we have opportunity, we are commanded to do good. What good is so good as saving souls, and have we not all ever-recurring opportunities for this? Consider your capacity: you can do something for the salvation of souls. Every one who has the knowledge of the way of salvation, and a tongue to speak, can explain it to others. Or if too timid to speak, he can give a tract, or write a letter, which will speak for him. There is not in all the family of God, a single child who can do nothing for the cause of his

Heavenly Father, in our apostate world; and nothing more is necessary to constitute obligation in such a matter as this, but the means and an opportunity. If when the ability and opportunity concur to rescue a fellow-creature from a watery grave, or a fiery death, the obligation is complete; how much more so, where the means and opportunity are possessed to save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins. Souls are perishing all around you; in your streets; in your neighbours' houses, and in your own.

Say not you can do nothing. Have you ever tried? Have you ever taken a bundle of tracts, and gone out into a dark street, and entered the houses of the poor, and begun a conversation with them about their souls? You have a Bible: have you ever put it into your pocket, and gone to some habitation of ignorance and sin, and asked permission to read a chapter? Have you ever written a letter to an unconverted friend or relative on the subject of religion, and the salvation of the soul? Have you ever mildly expostulated with a relative on the neglect of this momentous concern? Have you ever gently and gracefully reproved a swearer or a Sabbath-breaker for his sin against the Lord? Have you ever dropped a word to a fellow-traveller in a steam boat, or a railway carriage? Not do any thing! Will you, till you have tried some such simple and easy methods as these, have the courage to tell God so? Not do any thing! Will you degrade yourself so much, and sink so low in your own estimation, as to say you are a nonentity in the church as regards the church's mission to our world? Not do any thing! What is it in you that says so, your indolence, or your modesty? You must do something, or answer at the bar of God,

why you have done nothing. Be it that you have only one talent, or a fraction of a talent; that fraction, or that unit, must be employed, or you must bear the character and meet the doom of the slothful servant.

Of course, each professing Christian in his efforts to do good, must consult his own abilities, means, and opportunities. It is admitted that there are varieties here which must not be overlooked. Every one must say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do:" and each should honestly and with good intent, look into his circumstances to see what are Christ's claims upon him. Perhaps it will be found upon examination, that those do least in the way of personal effort who have the ability to do most; I mean the talented, the wealthy, and the manufacturer who has a large number of persons in his employ, and may be supposed to have a great influence over them. It happens that, with the exception perhaps of pious females of the upper classes, men of talent and business are most rarely found engaged in personal effort for the salvation of their neighbours: they will give their money, and sometimes will also give their time to the business of committees; and this so far is well, for many will not do this; but how seldom are they found engaged in personal effort for the conversion and salvation of others! Yet what might they not do in this way if they tried! Their station and their talents would give them advantages for this sublime occupation, which others do not possess. Conceive of the effect which might be expected to result, if all the wealthy and intelligent members of our churches, would each give only one hour a week to the labour of diffusing religion, by endeavouring to influence

the minds of others, and win their attention to the great concerns of religion.

This applies with especial force to master manufacturers, and others who have a large number of men in their employ, and under their influence. One gentleman is known to me who has several hundred men in his service, and who takes a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of his workmen. He has a Bible class for all who are willing to attend. He holds a prayer meeting with them every week; distributes religious tracts; gives them counsel and admonition; encourages their attendance upon public worship, without at all exerting any sectarian influence, and is about to establish for their benefit a library and reading-room. He is a catholic-spirited churchman, but never suffers his predilections for the Church of England to influence him in his endeavours for the spiritual welfare of the objects of his solicitude. What might not be expected to our population if all our manufacturers and large retail shop-keepers, felt the same pious solicitude for the souls of their work-people and shopmen as does this devoted and eminent servant of our Lord. How this would counteract the infidelity and immorality which so extensively prevail among our labouring population, and which with such busy assiduity are cherished by a corrupt press and by those emissaries of Satan, the teachers of scepticism, profanity, and licentiousness. Our factories are the strongholds of infidelity. It is there that all the elements of moral mischief mingle and ferment. The chaplain of the hospital in Birmingham was informed by one of the patients whom he visited, that out of three hundred men who worked in the same

manufactory as he did, he could affirm of his own personal knowledge, that one hundred of them were avowed infidels. Now there is no reason to suppose that this is a solitary case, but on the contrary a specimen of what very extensively prevails. It is among these men that the publications already alluded to are circulated. Surely it becomes Christian masters to ask whether they cannot do something to arrest the progress of this dreadful mischief! But alas! too many men in trade, even Christian masters, are either so little concerned about their workmen, as to care for nothing but just what measure of profit they can get from their labour; or else they are on such bad terms with them as to render nugatory any efforts they might make for their spiritual welfare.

Pious females have ever been foremost in this good work of saving souls by personal effort, and they have been eminently successful in their labours of love. Married women who have but few domestic cares to confine them at home, and unmarried ones of a sufficiently advanced age, who have much leisure at command, may be singularly useful. "Devout and honourable women not a few," are already busily employed in this way. Christian women! I appeal to you all to join this noble sisterhood of benevolence. I would not have you lessen that attention to the temporal wants, sorrows, and cares of your own sex, for which you are already so eminent, but I would have you add to it a still deeper solicitude for the miseries that oppress and ruin their souls. You know how the church of Rome boasts of her "Sisters of Mercy," whom she sends out from convents into the abodes of ignorance, disease, and want. It is after all but a shallow device, though a

plausible means, for drawing attention to Popery, and conciliating public favour towards it. I call therefore upon you to perform, without abjuring the names, duties, or comforts of the wife and the mother, the services of an evangelist, and by such acts as fall within your own sphere to spread abroad the knowledge of religion, in order to save the souls of your own sex, and thus to be, in the fullest sense of the words, Sisters of Mercy indeed.

Whatever be our situation there is no hope of our doing much good in this way, without having a definite object in view, and pursuing it in a right way, and with a proper spirit. The direct aim should be, of course, the actual conversion of the soul to God. Where nothing else, however, can be accomplished, than inducing people to read the Word of God and religious books, and to attend upon the preaching of the gospel, something is done; but the aim of a Christian should be, to be the instrument of making others truly and really such as he is himself.

You must be studious and inventive to accomplish this end, and to find out the best means of doing so within your power. It is astonishing what means will occur to him who is deeply anxious and firmly resolved upon the accomplishment of some great object. Let the heart be once on fire with zeal, and the light of this sacred flame will ascend into the judgment, as well as fall upon surrounding objects, and disclose means and methods of action hidden from colder intellects. When once the passion for saving souls has got possession of the heart, it will supply not only incentives but instruments. Necessity is the mother of invention, and when we are brought to this determination, "I must be

useful; I must do something to save souls; I must find means of doing good:" means will present themselves; and opportunities will occur. Invention is secondary creation, and he who cannot find opportunities, will certainly make them. Read the life of Harlan Page, a reference to which will be contained in a future chapter, and learn in how many ways a man, even in humble life, may be useful, whose heart is set upon doing good.

It is of immense consequence to remember that whatever you do for the salvation of souls, must be done in the earnestness of love, expressed with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. There is a boisterousness and vehemence, not to say rudeness, in the manner of some, which defeat their own object. They seem determined to take the citadel by storm; while love undermines it, and enters it almost unperceived. There is a beautiful illustration of this in the life of Mr Simeon, of Cambridge.

"Konig, the only son of a rich merchant of Amsterdam, came over to England, and was received as a guest by Mr Simeon's brother, in the Isle of Wight. It soon appeared that young Konig was destitute of true religion, and ignorant of its principles, but his appearance and manners were such as to invite kindly attention and feeling. Mr Simeon's benevolent heart was drawn towards him, and he earnestly desired to win this soul for Christ. One day he was riding a few yards in advance of a party of which Konig was one. Konig seeing Mr Simeon alone, rode up to join him; and perceiving that his lips were in motion, though he was not engaged in conversation, inquired with his usual simplicity, 'What he was saying.' Mr Simeon replied, 'I was praying for my young friend.' These words made a deep impression upon the interesting youth, and caused him to regard Mr Simeon as one who was tenderly concerned for his welfare. His mind had in fact been prepared by the providence of God for this impression, which might otherwise have been transient. The party, who were making the tour of the island, arrived at an inn, where Konig and another gentleman were necessitated to occupy a double-bedded room. The gentleman, before he retired to

rest, knelt down, and prayed by his bed-side. This, it afterwards appeared, was a new sight to the young Hollander; but it went to his heart. He had long been unhappy, from feeling the unsatisfactoriness of the things which are ordinarily accounted capable of conferring happiness; but knew not the better way. Immediately, however, as he afterwards declared, he said to himself, 'How happy is that man! What would I give to feel myself in the hands of an Almighty Guide and Protector, as he surely does!' Under this conviction he fell upon his knees, which he had not before done in private for years, and the very next morning he unbosomed himself to his companion. He was thus prepared for the reply of Mr Simeon to his enquiry, and was not repelled, but encouraged by it. Mr Simeon perceiving that the Spirit of God had marked this stranger for himself, resolved to do all in his power to train him for happiness and usefulness. His exertions were blessed for his conversion: and the writer who gives the account says, in referring to it afterwards, 'The remembrance of that youth, graceful in person and beaming with benignity, is even now redolent with every thing lovely and of good report. He was in fact ripening for early removal to a higher sphere. He returned to Holland, where he died of consumption; but not till he had been permitted and enabled to witness for his Saviour a good confession in his native city. The report of his behaviour during his death-illness excited considerable interest and surprise in Amsterdam, where his family were well known. Many it has been stated, seemed to say, 'What new thing is this?'"

This beautiful narrative is replete with instruction on the subject of this chapter.

Such efforts require a high state of personal religion to supply the impulse, and keep up the activity. The fire of zeal must be fed with the fuel of piety, or it will be only as, "the crackling of thorns beneath a pot," a noisy and a momentary blaze. And to be useful, a Christian must also be consistent. A diseased or dying physician may be the means of healing others; but an inconsistent Christian only inspires revulsion and disgust by all his endeavours to do good; disgust not only against himself as a hypocrite, but against the very religion he would teach, as being all hypocrisy also,

because wanting the confirmation of his obedience to it. They who would save others, then, should exhibit in themselves all the holiness and happiness of the salvation which it is their aim to communicate. There are some persons whom we could wish never to say a word to recommend religion, unless they would show its beauty in conduct consistent with it; and whom we could desire never to attempt to save their friends, unless they gave better proof they were really and in earnest seeking to save themselves. Not that the instrument of conversion must of necessity himself be absolutely perfect; for then none but an angel from heaven could be employed in saving man, but he ought to approach as near to perfection as possible. It should, moreover, be recollected as an encouragement to Christian exertion, that it is with instruments of conversion as it is with many other instruments, they improve by use. If you would grow in grace yourselves, seek to be the means of communicating grace to others. A light is brightened by kindling other lights, and a fire is made to burn with greater intensity by a neighbouring fire which it has ignited. We get good by doing it; and if we save not others, the very attempt aids, and in one sense, increases our own salvation.

Take the following anecdote from America, in illustration of the necessity of consistency in those who would make personal efforts for the salvation of sinners.

"An excellent minister, referring to his own conversion, said, 'When I was yet a young and thoughtless man, a pious deacon addressed me about my salvation. I was angry, my heart rose in bitterness against him. I reproached him; pointed out the inconsistencies of professors, talked indeed like a madman, while my conscience was grinding me like a millstone. He bore it all with meekness, perfectly unmoved. If he had only given one retort

shown one angry feeling, it would have relieved me. His Christian meekness was too much for me. I went into the woods, smarting with my wounds, fell under what he had said to me, and went and asked his pardon.' "*

And now by what arguments can you be persuaded, by what inducements moved, by what incentives excited, to make these efforts? Consider your principles. You believe in the immortality of the soul, in the evil of sin, in the curse of the law, in the wrath of God, in the reality of hell, in the horrors of damnation, in the intensity and eternity of the quenchless fire. You believe in a merciful God, a redeeming Saviour, a converting Spirit, in the possibility of salvation for each one of the perishing millions around you, in the ineffable and eternal bliss of heaven. You believe that it is God's will that men should be saved, and that they should be saved by human instrumentality, and by your exertions among the other means to be employed, this, all this, is in your creed. Christians, study afresh the articles of your faith, that you may know more accurately than you seem to do, what ought to be the obligations of your conscience, and the actions of your life. Indeed you must do more, or believe less; your creed and your conduct are at variance. Follow only one human soul into eternity; trace its endless course through delights which flesh and blood could not sustain; or through torments which human nature must have supernatural strength to endure; pursue it along the course of its eternal progression, and contemplate it making acquisitions in knowledge, holiness, and happiness, all but infinite, and leaving behind even the former attainments of cherubim and seraphim, or for

* From Dr. A. Reed's "Religion the Claim of the Times."

ever sinking from gulph to gulph of misery and despair in the bottomless abyss, and then conceive, if it be possible, in some tolerable degree, what an event is the salvation of a single soul! And when you have revolved the comprehension of this mighty and mysterious unit of a single soul, carry it on to the tens, and hundreds, and thousands, or tens of thousands, of such souls, that are hurrying on to eternity, even in the town where you dwell! Christians, again I say, abjure these vast ideas, or act more comformably to them. Abandon your belief in these stupendous realities, or prove that you individually are absolved from the obligation of arresting this tide of ruin, and swelling the stream of salvation, or else be more in earnest in your endeavour to save souls. You must do one or the other. In your present conduct, with such a profession upon your lips, and with such lukewarmness in your zeal, your conduct is the most monstrous inconsistency in our world. Infidels see it, and comparing your creed and your conduct, taunt you with your hypocrisy.

"I remember," says Mr Binney, "a very striking circumstance which a neighbouring minister mentioned to me in proof of this. There was in the town in which he preached an avowed and determined infidel. He saw this man one Sunday evening in his place of worship. He was preaching on some of the great verities of faith, and the duties resulting therefrom. As he was the next morning passing the door of the man, he was standing at it, and he said to him, 'I saw you at worship last night, and was rather surprised to see you there, as you do not believe what I was preaching.' 'No,' said he, 'nor you either.' 'Indeed.' 'No:' he went on to say, 'Why if I were to believe the things you affirm to be true, and which are written in your books, I should not know how to contain myself. I should feel their importance so much, that I should exhibit them wherever I went. I should not know how to hold in the enthusiasm they would excite. But I do not believe them, nor do you, or you would be very different people from what you are.'"

Dreadful sarcasm! Cutting irony! Withering rebuke! But how deserved! Shall we not feel it? Shall we not learn our defects, our duty, our inconsistency, even from an infidel? Let us look at and judge ourselves, as infidels, who examine us and try us by our creed and profession, judge us. Rouse yourselves, Christians, rouse yourselves to action; do something worthy of your principles. Roll away your reproach, and silence the taunt of your adversaries.

Think of the honour of success. What a volume, never to be fully known in this world, is comprehended in the apostle's beautiful language, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." A sinner wandering from God, from holiness, and bliss, restored to the fountain of life and light; a soul dead in trespasses and sins, quickened into life; a multitude of sins, each one of them containing the sentence and venom of an eternal curse, all covered over by an act of pardoning mercy, what an achievement! The liberation of a nation from the fetters of slavery, and the rescue of an empire from the ravages of a pestilence, viewed as temporal deliverances, are not to be compared with the eternal salvation of one immortal soul. If one of the planets of our system had broken away from the influence of gravitation, and was rushing off into space, threatening ruin to itself, and to other orbs, into collision with which in its course of destruction it might be brought, and it were in our power to restore it again to its place, dependency, and orbit; it would be less a matter of exultation, than to be the instrument of saving a

single soul from the bitter pains of eternal death. What was the civic crown awarded to him who had saved the life of a Roman soldier on the field of battle; or the statue of brass erected to him who had defeated in battle his country's foe; or the shrine which is erected in the temple of fame for him who has enriched his country and the world by some splendid discovery in science, or invention in art, compared with the crown of amaranth which shall flourish for ever on the brow of the Christian who has saved a soul from death. Medals, statues, arches, processions, are all puerilities compared with this; and such is the distinction placed within the reach of every child of God. What an incentive to earnestness this; and yet, how few the competitors for such a crown, and such an honour!

Consider, moreover, what others have done, and done with no greater advantages than you have possessed. Instances have occurred, perhaps within the range of your own observation, of persons who have laid themselves out with extraordinary earnestness, and with as extraordinary success, for the salvation of souls. They have been the honoured instruments of bringing many to Christ. It is their exquisite felicity on earth, and will be their still higher felicity in heaven, to receive the grateful acknowledgments of those whom they have plucked as brands from the burning. This is a happiness which angels know not. They indeed rejoice over souls converted by others, but never over any converted by themselves: in this particular, they are inferior to many a poor peasant who has been the instrument of saving a soul from death. Envy not such persons, but imitate them. Their bliss may be

yours. What they have done, you by God's grace may do. It was not by might nor by power, that they did it, but by God's truth and God's Spirit. That truth may be presented by you as it was by them, and God's Spirit is as willing to come on your humble labours, as he was upon theirs. He loves to bless feeble but willing instruments, that he may magnify his own power.

As a proof of what some others have done, take the following instance, which has been brought under my notice by one of our home missionaries, in a letter I lately received from him. After describing the great spiritual destitution of large tracts of our country, and our inability to supply this lamented deficiency by any organization we now have or are ever likely to have, he adds,

"I have been thinking of a plan which in some instances has been tried and greatly blessed for the spread of the gospel, and the conversion of souls. Are there not in the churches of our cities and large towns, men of ardent piety and love to souls, of ability to preach the gospel with simplicity, affection, and power, of wealth to support themselves, and leisure to labour for God and precious souls? Are not some of their talents buried for want of a proper sphere for their exertion? Could they not obtain a comfortable residence for themselves in these districts, and devote themselves to the eternal welfare of those for whom no other spiritual provision is made?

"A dear relative of mine some years ago had a considerable amount of property left him. He at once retired from business to devote himself entirely to the work of the Lord. He was the instrument of introducing the gospel to this town where I now labour. He went to reside at a village about eight miles from hence. He there began to preach, built one chapel, then another, and then another, in different hamlets. We have two village chapels connected with us besides. Other chapels in this locality sprung from his efforts. It is gratifying and astonishing to consider how the gospel has spread, and is still spreading; and we trace back these streams to the blessing of God upon the efforts of this servant of his.

He died in the pulpit nearly four years ago. His son, now residing upon his own farm, is the zealous and successful pastor of the church which his father was the instrument of gathering. Two day-schools and four Sabbath-schools have arisen from the same efforts.

"Now, sir, are there not others connected with our churches, who may go and do likewise? May we not believe that God would crown with his blessing such efforts as these?"

Believe! We are sure of it. This is what we want. This we must have, or we can never overtake the population of our country with the means of grace. I say again and again, and I say it with all possible emphasis, and would send it if I could with a trumpet-blast over the land, "Societies must not be substitutes for personal labours. Organization must not crush individual effort. Here was an individual not waiting for any society, but going off himself to the scene of moral desolation, venturing alone into the wilderness, going single-handed, but strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, to pour the light of truth over a dark neighbourhood. See how God honoured and blessed him: what good he did, what a name he left. Ye who have talents as well as piety, and in addition have abundant wealth, or a competency at any rate, why not imitate this beautiful example? Why content yourselves with getting more wealth, which you do not want, when you might be employed in building chapels, forming churches, planting schools, and saving souls. How noble an association, the country gentleman and the village pastor; the retired merchant and the preacher of the gospel! Is there nothing to fire your ambition, to excite your ardour, to kindle a holy enthusiasm, in such a prospect and such a hope? I am not setting aside an educated ministry, for a system of lay preaching: but am speaking of spots where no congregation exists, no

chapel is built, and where none is ever likely to exist without some such plan as this.

Remember how little you have hitherto done. You have experimentally known the way of salvation, and the value of souls, these ten, twenty, thirty years, and yet up to this hour, you have perhaps never won a soul to God: perhaps have never tried to win one. Marvellous! Painful neglect, irretrievable omission! The wasted hours can never be recalled, the lost souls that have dropped into the pit from beneath your very eye and hand, can never be placed again within the circle of your influence. As you saw them falling, you stretched out no helping hand, and there amidst the torments of despair they are, uttering their reproaches upon your cruel indifference. Time is still rolling on; souls are still crowding to perdition, and soon, soon, both you and they will be in eternity. Hasten, oh hasten, to the scene of ruin: put forth every energy: their damnation lingers not, and shall your compassion linger? Shall your efforts still be withheld?

Once more consider what would be the result, were all the members of our churches stirred up to an earnest endeavour to save souls. Take a community of Christians, of three, four, or five hundred communicants, yea of a lesser number, and think of all these, each in his own sphere, and according to his own talents, means, and opportunity, labouring for God and souls. Think of five hundred, or even of one hundred professing believers in the verities of revelation, scattered over the whole expanse of a town or village, communicating more or less with the whole population; some of them masters and mistresses at the head of families; others, manufacturers presiding over large establishments of

workmen; others, servants in the midst of godless households; others, workmen surrounded by wicked fellow-workers; others, rich or well-informed, and possessing considerable influence in society; others, poor and inhabiting courts where neighbours on all hands have an opportunity to see their conduct, and hear their conversation; others, young and possessing all the health and energy of their years, and in the habit of meeting with persons of their own age; let such a community be conceived of, where all its members were walking in holy conversation and godliness, sending forth the light of a beautiful example, full of zeal, labouring for the salvation of their fellows, and inspired with the ambition, and animated with the hope, of saving souls by personal effort, each studying what he could do, and each doing what he could, what might not be looked for as the glorious result of such general activity, zeal, and earnestness! What an awakening would take place, what revivals would come on! Would not God pour out his Spirit on such churches as these? What prayer would ascend, and what showers of blessings would come down in their season! When our churches shall exhibit such scenes as these, then will God's work go on in the earth. And why do they not exhibit such scenes? Are not these the scenes they ought to exhibit? Is not this the intention for which they are raised up? Friends of Christ, and truth, and God, look back for a moment again to the horrifying details of a former part of this chapter, read again the statistics of the Pandemonium of infidelity and immorality, and say if the passion for ruining souls shall be more intense among the emissaries of Satan, than the passion for saving them shall be among the followers

of the Lamb. O what, and who, shall rouse the church of God to a sense of her duty, her destiny, and her honour, as God's instrument for converting an ungodly world? Where is the more than trumpet breath that with the thunders of the skies and the voice of eternal truth, shall break in upon the slumber of a luxurious church, and rouse her to her mission as a witnessing and a proselyting body! What visitations of mercy, or of judgment; what internal commotions, or external assaults; what national convulsions, or social disruptions, are necessary to call her to her work, and prepare her to perform it? When shall all controversies seem to be little or nothing, compared with the church's one great controversy against sin, Satan, and perdition? When shall every Christian feel that God's chief end of keeping him out of heaven for a season, is that he may keep immortal souls out of hell? When shall another Luther rise up in the midst of the Protestant church, and rouse us from our worldly-mindedness, even as the first delivered us from Popery? When shall another Whitfield pass through the midst of us, and with his burning eloquence kindle a fire of zeal in our hearts which shall consume our earthliness, and purify the gold of our faith? Shall infidelity, Popery, and false philosophy, share the world between them? Individual Christians, priesthood of God, consider and decide.

CHAPTER V.

PARENTAL EARNESTNESS.

The next step from individual earnestness is to that which is expressed at the head of this chapter. This of course, has reference to the duties of parents. It is not my intention to enter at large on the great subject of religious education in all its details; this I have already done in my work entitled "The Family Monitor, or a Help to Domestic Happiness:" but only to insist on the importance and necessity of carrying forward this work with the most intense solicitude and the most untiring devotedness. Perhaps at no period in the church's history has this been understood and felt as it ought to be; but it is to be feared that there have been few periods since the revival of religion, when it has been less felt than it is now. How few are the habitations, even of professors, upon entering which the stranger would be compelled to say, "Surely this is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven." And yet ought it not to be so? Ought not the dwellings of the righteous to be filled with the elements of piety, the atmosphere of true religion? It may be that family prayer, such as it is, is performed, though coldly and formally and with little seriousness and no unction; but even this in many cases is wholly omitted, and

scarcely anything remains to indicate that God has found a dwelling in that house. There may be no actual dissipation, no drunkenness, no card playing, but O, how little of true devotion is there! How few families are there so conducted as to make it a matter of surprise that any of the children of such households should turn out otherwise than pious; how many that lead us greatly to wonder that any of the children should turn out otherwise than irreligious! Now the church cannot be in earnest if its families are not. The awakening of attention to the claims of religion must begin in the domestic circle. Ministers may be in earnest for the salvation of the young, and their schoolmasters and mistresses may be in earnest for it, but if parents also are not, all the efforts and influence both of the pulpit and the school united will be in vain. Home is usually the mould of character; and the parent is the help or hindrance of the minister of religion. Parents, this chapter then, is for you. Fathers and mothers, read not another line until you have lifted up your hearts to God in prayer, for a blessing on what is now submitted to your attention.

Thoroughly understand and remember what it is we are now considering; it is not merely religious education, but earnestness in this momentous duty. It is not whether you are paying some attention to the salvation of your children, but whether you are paying such attention as this great subject requires: whether you are so devoting yourself to the religious education of your children, as that a visitor on leaving your house shall bear this testimony concerning your parental solicitude, "That father and mother are really anxious for their children's salvation: it is seen in all their

conduct." This is the question, whether you are so pursuing this object as that your children themselves shall say, "My father and mother are truly in earnest about my soul." This is the question, I repeat, whether religion is the great thing, the one thing, you are pursuing for them? Does it gather up into itself your chief solicitude and control your general plans? What I mean by earnestness in domestic religion will be obvious from the following considerations.

I. It includes a deep thoughtfulness about the subject; a religious thoughtfulness. You will, if you are thus pensive, often say, "I am a parent. I am a Christian parent. I profess to believe my child has a soul, the salvation or the loss of which will depend much upon me. Yes, upon me does it much depend whether my children are to be for ever in glory, or in perdition. How inexpressibly awful! how tremendously important! I have not only bodies to care for, or minds to cultivate, but souls, immortal souls, to bring to Christ! Every other parent, whether beast or bird, by instinct teaches its offspring the highest good of which their nature is capable; and shall I, by neglecting to teach mine religion, neglect the highest good of which their immortal nature is susceptible? Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, yea they give suck to their young: and shall I be more cruel than they?"

II. There must be a right understanding and a constant recollection of the nature and design of the domestic constitution.

Families are the nurseries both of the state and of the church; and if this be true, then the design of the domestic economy must be to form the good citizen and the true Christian. No doubt the present

and future welfare of the individual members of each household, their right conduct towards each other, and their own good training for all domestic relations they may in future sustain, are the proximate objects to be sought; but the ultimate end is the formation of a character in which patriotism, loyalty, and piety, shall be beautifully united and harmonized. Well-instructed, well-ordered, and well-governed families, are the springs which from their retirements send forth the tributary streams that make up, by their confluence, the majestic flow of national greatness and prosperity. No state can be prosperous where family order and subordination are generally neglected, and every one will be prosperous, whatever be its form of political government, where they are maintained. Disorderly families are the sources of vicious characters, pestilent criminals, factious demagogues, turbulent rebels, and tyrannical oppressors, who are their neighbours' torment, and their country's scourge.

But every family has also a sacred character belonging to it, which ought ever to be sustained; I mean it is a preparatory school both for the church militant and the church triumphant, where immortal souls are to be trained up by the influence of a pious education, for the fellowship of saints on earth, and for the felicities of a higher association still, in heaven. The mother, as she presses her babe to her bosom, or sees the little group sporting around the hearth; and the father, as he collects the circle round his chair or his table; as he directs their education, or selects for them their future occupation, should never forget to say to themselves, "These are given to us that we may train them up to be useful members of society, and holy members of the church.

God and our country will demand them at our hands. Yea, the destinies of the world will in some measure be affected by them, and the present and all future generations of mankind have claims upon us in reference to the training of our children." Yes, those children are something more than living domestic play-things; something more than animated household ornaments, who by their elegant accomplishments, and graceful manners, shall adorn the habitation, and be their father's pride, their mother's boast: they are the next inhabitants of our country, and the next race of friends or enemies to the cause of God on earth. The family then, I repeat, is the mould where the members of both the state and the church are cast and formed, and this ought never for a single day to be forgotten.

III. Earnestness implies a deep sense of the tremendous responsibility of the parental relation. Delightful as it may be to hear infants' prattle; to witness the gambols of childhood's joyous years; to mark the growing development of faculty, and the gradual formation of character during youth's advance to manhood; interesting as it is to see the slow unfolding of the human flower, still a solemn sense of responsibility, ought, with all this, to come over the mind. It is an awful expression, "I am a parent:" for what is it but saying, "I have immortal souls entrusted to my care, whose destiny for eternity will be affected by my conduct." Fond mother, look at that babe hanging on thy breast, and those other children sporting around your knee; and thou, the father of the group, watching with a parent's and husband's swelling heart, thy wife and the mother of thy children, and indulging only in joyous emotions and sportive expressions, pause, ponder, reflect,

millions of ages from that moment of domestic ecstacy every one of those little happy creatures will be either in heaven or in hell, will be a seraph or a fiend, will be enduring inconceivable torment, or enjoying ineffable felicity: and the fearful alternative in great part will depend upon you. Overwhelming thought! Is it true? Can it be true? It is: and you admit it, at least in profession. Then I say again, how tremendous the responsibility of a parent! This is earnestness, to have this fact written on our very heart; to see it ever standing out in visible characters before our eyes; to carry it with us every where, and into every thing; to be ever saying to ourselves, "My child is immortal, and his eternal destiny in great measure depends upon me. I am not only the author of his existence, but in some measure of his destiny. I shall be the means perhaps of raising him to heaven, or sinking him to perdition. I am educating him to be an associate with the devil and his angels in everlasting fire, or a companion with the innumerable company of angels in glory everlasting. O God, help me! for who is sufficient for these things?"

IV. Arising out of this, and as a necessary adjunct, earnestness implies a concentration of our chief solicitude upon the salvation of their souls. A Christian parent who is not only nominally anxious for the salvation of his children, but really so, often says to himself, "Yes, I see it; I feel it; I own it; my children are immortal creatures, their souls are entrusted to my care, and will be required at my hands, and their salvation depends much upon me. Then by God's grace, 'this one thing I will do,' I will make their salvation, above all things besides, the object of my desire, of my pursuit, and of

my prayer. I will neglect nothing that can conduce to their respectability, comfort, and usefulness in this world; but above and beyond this, I will chiefly desire and do whatever can conduce to the salvation of their souls. Their religious character shall be, in my estimation, the one thing needful, with reference to them. What shall I do, what can I do, that they may be saved?" Ah, this is it; an ever-wakeful concern for their eternal welfare, an inventive solicitude for their immortal destiny; a determined, resolute subordination of every thing else to this as the supreme object; such a solicitude as never sleeps or tires; such a solicitude as leads, like all other anxieties, to the use of right means. Not merely a concern, but the concern; not one among many objects, but the one great, commanding, controlling, absorbing object; which if it be not gained, makes a father or a mother mourn over the highest degree of worldly prosperity to which a child can attain, and exclaim, "Yes, he is successful for this world, and of course I am not insensible to the advantage of this, but alas! it is unsanctified prosperity, which I would gladly and gratefully exchange on his behalf, for sanctified adversity."

V. An earnest man will be cautious to avoid mistakes: he will say to any one who can give him information, "Do guard me against error, that I may be kept from mis-spending my time, and mis-directing my labour." Now there are some mistakes in education, against which the Christian parent should be cautioned, and against which he should most assiduously guard. A very common, and a most fatal one, is this; that the conversion of children is to be looked for rather as a sudden thing, which is to be expected as the result

of some single event, such as a sermon, or an address, or a letter, or the perusal of a book, than from a systematic and continued course of instruction, discipline, and example. It is a very frequent thing for Christian parents to say to themselves, and sometimes as an excuse for their own indolence and neglect, "We are taught that regeneration is a sudden and instantaneous change wrought by the Spirit of God; and therefore, though my children exhibit no symptoms of religious concern at present, yet I hope the time will come, when by the blessing of God upon some event, or some means or other, they will be brought suddenly and at once to decision. Perhaps it may be at school, for I have selected pious instructors; or it may be by the preaching of the gospel, for they hear very faithful and energetic ministers; or it may be by some visitation of God in the way of bodily sickness. I live in hope that the good time will come when I shall yet see them converted to God." And, perhaps, all this while there is no systematic course of instruction and of discipline going on at home, so that their religious character is left to whatever contingencies may arise. Fatal delusion! False reasoning! Ruinous mistake! It is very true that in some cases conversion is sudden, but this is such a perversion of the fact, as involves not only mistakes, but criminality. If it is sudden, how do such parents know but that the very next efforts which they themselves make, may be the happy means of effecting it; and ought they not, upon their own principle, to be ever labouring for, and ever expecting, the blessed result? The fact is, it means nothing less than an indolent handing over the religious education of their children to schoolmasters, to ministers, to friends, to

whomsoever will undertake it, and even to chance, so that they may be rid of the trouble. A parent, who has right views of his relationship and his responsibility, will say, "I may commit the general education of my children to others, but not their religious training. This is too momentous to be entrusted out of my own hands. Others may be ignorant, negligent, or erroneous: I must see, therefore, to this matter myself. I cannot transfer my relation or my responsibility, and I will not transfer my exertions. God will require my children at my hands, and as I cannot reckon with him by proxy, so I will not work by proxy. And I will endeavour, by God's grace, to form their religious character by a system and a course of moral training, and not look for it as the sudden result of passing incidents." This is a correct view of the subject, and the only correct one. Sudden conversions do often take place in those who have not enjoyed the advantages of a religious education, but rarely in those who have. In the latter case, there is often a gradual change of character and conduct, the effect of good training, which issues at last in regeneration; and in some few rare instances of the conversion to God of the children of judicious, earnest Christians, the change has been so gradual as to be scarcely perceptible. Were all Christian parents to act in the same way, the same results might with good reason be expected, and domestic education would be the ordinary means of conversion for the children of the godly. There is more truth in the proverb, even as regards religion, than many persons are disposed to allow, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This does not ensure success in every instance,

but it warrants the expectation of it, and should make the want, and not the acquisition of it, matter of surprise. In all scriptural means of conversion, there is an adaptation to the end to be accomplished, though there is no necessary connexion between them; and were right means always used, efficiency would more frequently be the result than it now is. This is especially true of religious education. Let parents give up all dependence upon teachers and ministers, though thankfully availing themselves of their collateral aid, and consider that they are the persons to be looked to as the instruments of their children's conversion; and, at the same time, let them abandon the expectation of sudden conversions by contingent circumstances, and look for this blessed result from the grace of God upon a system of instruction and discipline begun early, extending through every thing, and carried on with judgment, perseverance, and prayer, and then they will see much more frequently than they now do, the happy consequences of this holy training of the youthful mind for God.

A second mistake in religious education is putting off the commencement of it too long. Earnestness means seizing the first opportunity that occurs for doing a thing, and indeed a looking out and waiting for the first season of action. "Begin yourself, begin well, and begin soon," are the maxims of common sense, which apply to every thing, and especially to religion. Evil is already in the heart at birth, and begins to grow with the child's mental growth, strengthens with his strength, and must be resisted by early endeavours to root it out, and to plant and nourish good. Most parents begin too late. They have let Satan get

before-hand with them, and have suffered corruption to grow too long and get too much strength before they attack it. Half the failures in religious education, yea, a far greater proportion may be traced up to this cause. Temper can be disciplined, conscience may be exercised, subordination may be inculcated, and the child be made to feel the consequences of disobedience, long before he can receive what may be called religious instruction.

A third mistake to be avoided is, making religious instruction a thing by and for itself, and not sustaining it by other things which are related to it, and which have considerable influence upon it. Earnestness presses every thing into its service, and avoids whatever would defeat its end. A person intent upon some object which he considers to be of importance, will sustain his pursuit of it, by attending to whatever will aid his endeavours, and will carefully watch against every thing which would impede his progress, or defeat his purpose. It were to be wished that Christian parents would act upon this principle, and call in the aid of whatever can promote their one great object. With many, it is to be feared, religious education is nothing more than a mere patch upon the system of training, a bit sewed on, and not an integral part of the whole, the very warp of the texture. For instance, they will teach a little religion occasionally, and perhaps frequently, and somewhat seriously; but all this while will take no pains to inculcate obedience to themselves, to discipline the temper, to cultivate habits of application, to produce thoughtfulness, kindness, and general good behaviour. When a farmer wishes to produce a good crop, he not only prepares the ground, and sows good seed, but he takes care that the young corn shall enjoy every advantage for

growth; and knowing that weeds will stifle it and drain away its nourishment, and keep out the sun's rays, he takes care to clear the ground of them. So it is with the earnest parent, he not only communicates religious instruction, and thus sows the good seed, but he takes care to keep down the weeds, and to do all he can to aid the growth of the plant. Some very good people have erred here; they have taught, entreated, and prayed; and then wondered that their children did not become truly pious: but their excessive indulgence, their injudicious fondness, their utter neglect of all discipline, the relaxation of their authority, their neglect of themselves, till the children have been taught to consider that they, and not their parents, were the most important personages in the household, might have explained to them, as they did to others, the causes of their failure. If general excellence of disposition and character be not cultivated along with that which is specifically religious, the latter will be of but slow and sickly growth.

The last mistake in religious education which an earnest parent must avoid, to which I shall refer, is the confounding instruction with education; that is mistaking a part for the whole; the means for the end. What, in the estimation of many, is religious education? Nothing more than the communication of so much religious knowledge, a little Scripture, a few hymns, or a catechism, committed to memory. Alas, even this is not done in the families of some professors: and I have heard an anxious and accomplished mistress of a ladies' school express her grief and astonishment at the ignorance of the very elements of Biblical knowledge displayed by not a few of her pupils who had come from the families of professors of religion. Some of the

children of the higher classes in our Sunday schools would put to the blush many of these young ladies of our boarding schools. And even the more diligent parents are but too apt to stop with the mere communication of knowledge: though it is not education in the more comprehensive sense of the word, which means the formation of character. And from the quarter which I have just mentioned, I have heard most emphatic testimony borne to the anxious and judicious care which that respectable body of professing Christians, the Quakers, themselves take at home to form their children's characters. None have been better trained, she has informed me, than those who have come to her from such families. There is a habit of thoughtfulness, by no means gloomy or unaccompanied by cheerfulness; a sense of propriety, without any such stiffness as is generally supposed to appertain to these young persons; a respectful submissiveness, not found in many others; and a soundness of judgment, which afford admirable specimens of good domestic training. The fact is that some of what are called the accomplishments of fashionable and elegant education are banished from the families of the Quakers, to make way for the cultivation of the mind and heart, and the formation of the character. There may be, and I think there are, omissions in their system, which I should supply; but for the inculcation of habits of reflection, good sense, general propriety of conduct, orderliness, and control of the temper and passions, most parents may take a lesson from the home education of Quaker children.

Now observe the conduct of earnest parents. In addition to the communication of knowledge, they admonish, entreat, warn, and counsel. They direct the

reading of their children, and watch carefully what books come into their hands. They analyze their characters, and make themselves intimately acquainted with their peculiarities of disposition and tendencies, that they may know how to adapt their treatment to each. They encourage habits of subjection, modesty, reflection, conscientiousness, frankness, and at the same time, respect for all, especially for themselves. They dwell on the pleasures of religion, and the misery of sin. They repress faults, and encourage budding excellences. They speak to them of the honour and happiness of good men, not only in another world, but in this. They endeavour to implant in their hearts the fear of God, the love of Christ, and the desire of holiness. Every thing is done to render religion attractive, and yet to exhibit it as a holy and an awful reality. They watch the conduct, and look out for matter of commendation and of censure. In short, their object and aim are the real, right, and permanent formation of the religious character, the character of the genuine Christian.

Parents, you are always educating your children for good, or for evil. Not only by what you say, but by what you do: not only by what you intend, but by what you are: you yourself are one constant lesson which many eyes are observing, and which many hearts are receiving. Influence, power, impulse, are ever going out from you: take care then how you act.

Let me then here remind you of the immense importance of three things: first, Parental Example. What example is so powerful as that of a parent? It is one of the first things which a child observes; it is that which is most constantly before his eyes, and it is that which his very relationship inclines him most

attentively to respect, and most assiduously to copy. Every act of parental kindness, every effort to please, every favour conferred, softens a child's heart to receive the impressions which such an example is likely to stamp upon the soul. Vain, worse than useless, is the instruction which is not followed up by example. Good advice, when not illustrated by good conduct, inspires disgust. There are multitudes of parents to whom I should deliberately give the counsel never to say one syllable to their children on the subject of religion, unless they enforce what they say by a better example. Silence does infinitely less mischief than the most elaborate instruction which is all counteracted by inconsistent conduct. It is no matter, either of wonder or regret, that some professing Christians discontinue family prayer. How can they act the part of a hypocrite so conspicuously before their households, as to pray in the evening, when every action of the day has been so opposed to every syllable of their prayer. O, what consistent and uniform piety, what approaches to perfection, ought there to be in him who places himself twice every day before his household at the family altar, as their prophet, priest, and intercessor with God. It seems to me as if the holiest and best of us were scarcely holy enough to sustain the parental character, and discharge the parental functions. It would seem as if this were a post for which we could be fitted only by being first raised to the condition of spirits made perfect, and then becoming again incarnate, with celestial glory beaming around our character. What an additional motive is there in this view of our duty, for cultivating with a more intense earnestness the spirit of personal religion!

Would you see the result of parental misconduct, look into the family of David. Eminent as he was for the spirit of devotion, sweet as were the strains which flowed from his inspired muse, and attached as he was to the worship of the sanctuary, yet what foul blots rested upon his character, and what dreadful trials did he endure in his family! What profligate creatures were his sons: and who can tell how much the apostacy of Solomon was to be traced up to the recollection of parental example? Parents, beware, I beseech you, how you act. O let your children see religion in all its sincerity, power, beauty, and loveliness; and this may win them to Christ.

But there is another thing to be observed, and that is the mischief of excessive indulgence. Read the history of Eli, as recorded by the pen of inspiration. The honours of the priesthood and of the magistracy lighted upon him. He was beloved and respected by the nation whose affairs he administered, and to all appearance seemed likely to finish a life of active duty, in the calm repose of an honoured old age. But the evening of his life, at one time so calm and so bright, became suddenly overcast, and a storm arose which burst in fury upon his head, and dashed him to the ground by its dreadful thunder bolts. Whence did it arise? Let the words of the historian declare, "I have told him, said the Lord, that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Poor old man, who can fail to sympathize with him under the terror of that dreadful sentence, which crushed his dearest hopes and beclouded all his prospects: but the sting, the venom of the sentence, was in

the declaration that a criminal unfaithfulness on his part had brought upon his beloved sons ruin both temporal and eternal. All this destruction upon his sons, all this misery upon himself, was the consequence of weak and criminal parental indulgence. Doubtless it began while they were yet children; their every wish and every whim were indulged, their foolish inclinations were gratified; he could never be persuaded that any germs of malignant passions lurked under appearances so playful and so lovely; he smiled at transgressions on which he ought to have frowned; and instead of endeavouring kindly but firmly to eradicate the first indications of pride, anger, ambition, deceit, self-will, and stubbornness, he considered they were but the wild flowers of spring, which would die of themselves as the summer advanced. The child grew in this hot bed of indulgence into the boy; the boy into the youth; the youth into the young man; till habit had confirmed the vices of the child, and acquired a strength which not only now bid defiance to parental restraint, but laughed it to scorn. Contemplate the poor old man, sitting on the way-side upon his bench, in mute despair, his heart torn with self-reproach, listening with sad presages for tidings from the field of conflict. At length the messenger arrives, the doleful news is told. The ark of God is taken, and Hophni and Phinchas are slain. His aged heart is broken, and he and his whole house are crushed at once under that one sin, the excessive weakness and wickedness of a false and foolish parental indulgence.

Parents, and especially mothers, look at this picture and tremble: contemplate this sad scene, and learn the necessity of judicious, affectionate, firm, and persevering discipline.

To all this, add earnest, believing, and persevering prayer. Let family devotion be maintained with regularity, variety, affectionate simplicity, and great seriousness. As conducted by some, it is calculated rather to disgust than to delight. It is so hastily, perfunctorily, and carelessly performed, that it seems rather a mockery, than a solemnity; there is neither seriousness nor earnestness in it. On the other hand, how subduing and how melting are the fervent supplications of a godly and consistent father, when his voice, tremulous with emotion, is uttering to the God of heaven the desires of his heart for the children bending around him! Is there, out of heaven, a sight more deeply interesting than a family gathered at morning or evening prayer, where the worship is what it ought to be? When the good man takes the "big ha' Bible," and with patriarchal grace reads to his household the words of heavenly truth? And then the hymn of domestic gladness, in which even infants learn to lisp their Maker's praise; not better music is there to the ears of Jehovah in the seraphim's song, than that concord of sweet sounds: and last of all the prayer; oh, that strain of intercession, in which each child seems to hear the throbbing of a father's heart for him! When this is the type of the families of professors; when family religion is conducted after this fashion; when the spectator of what is going on in such households shall be compelled to say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel:" when earnestness, after beginning in the soul of the Christian, shall communicate itself to the parent, what a new state of things may we expect in the church of Christ.

In my volume addressed to the ministry I remarked

that the conversion of the children of the pious should be looked for at home, and from the blessing of God on the endeavours of Christian parents. And this is quite true, and a truth which cannot be put forward too prominently, or enforced upon public attention too urgently. I cannot be supposed to under-rate the importance of the pulpit nor the value of preaching; but it is possible so to exalt this order of means as to depress, if not to displace, all others. God never intended by preaching to subvert or set aside the domestic constitution, or to silence the voice of the parental teacher. All systems that obtrude any one, whether priest, preacher, or school-master, between the parent and his child, so as to merge the obligations of the latter in the functions of the former, are opposed alike to nature and to revelation. God will hold every parent responsible for the instruction of his children, and it will be no excuse for his neglect of them that he has handed them over to another. One of the earliest and most certain indications of a revived church, will be the marked revival of domestic religion. Whatever stir be made congregationally or ministerially, will still leave the church but partially awakened, and religion but negligently attended to, till the families of the righteous are become the scenes of religious concern and of spiritual instruction. The canon of the Old Testament closes with these remarkable words, "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Under the Christian dispensation, the children were to be brought in with their fathers, and through their instrumentality: and

whenever throughout the various churches of Christ we shall be favoured to see those who sustain the relation of parents intensely earnest for the salvation of their children, and adopting all proper means for that end, then shall we see the blissful sight of fathers leading their sons, and mothers their daughters, and bringing their children to the church for membership, saying, "Behold, I and the children thou hast given me." Then will the families of the saints present the beautiful scene, more than once spoken of in the New Testament, of a church in the house.

This state of things will, perhaps, in some measure account for a very painful fact, which both parents and ministers attest and lament, that very few of the sons of our more wealthy members become truly pious. Many of the daughters are brought under the influence of true piety, and come into our fellowship, but comparatively few of the sons. I am aware that as a general fact, far more women are pious than men; but the disproportion is, I think, still greater in the class to which I now allude, than in any other. Many concurring causes will account for this. Young men go out into the world, and are exposed to its temptations, while the daughters remain at home under the sheltering care of their parents. It requires greater moral courage in a young man to profess religion, than in a female. Young men are more swallowed up in business, and have their minds more drawn away from religion, by this means. They are more exposed to the influence of bad companions, and are more in the way of being injured by scepticism and heresy. They are allured to out-of-door recreations and games, which lead them into

company. And from the fact of a large proportion of pious people being females, young men are carried away with the shallow and flippant notion that religion is a matter pertaining to the weaker sex, rather than to them. These things will account for the fact to which I now allude, which is indeed a very painful one. Our churches and our institutions need the aid of pious young men of this class. We know the soul of a female is as precious in the sight of God, as one of the opposite sex, and we know how valuable are female influence and agency in all religious matters; but women cannot be in such things a substitute for men; and therefore, we do lament that so few of our respectable young men become truly pious.

To what use ought this painful fact to be turned, and to what specific efforts should it give rise? First of all, it should lead Christian parents to pay a more diligent and anxious attention to the religious education of their sons. Daughters must not be neglected, but sons must have special pains taken with them. As in good agriculture, most labour is bestowed on an unproductive soil, to make it yield a crop, so in the religious culture of the heart, the main solicitude should be directed to the boys. Mothers, I beseech you, look to them, and from the very dawn of reason exert your plastic influence over their more sturdy natures. Be anxious for your sons; think of their dangers and difficulties. Imagine, sometimes, that you see that lovely boy, a future prodigal, lost to himself, to his parents, to the church, and to society, and yourself dying under the sorrows of a heart broken by his misconduct; at other times, look upon the enrapturing picture of his rising

up to be a minister of religion, or the deacon of a church, foremost in aiding the religious institutions of the day, and yielding the profits of a successful business to the cause of God in our dark world. Oh, dedicate that boy to God, with all the fulness of a mother's love, both for him and for his Lord, and pour over him all the influences of a mother's judicious care and culture. Fathers, I say to you also, look well to your sons; be doubly solicitous, and doubly laborious, and doubly prayerful in reference to them. Be the friend, the companion, the counsellor of your sons, as well as their father. Be intensely solicitous to see them not only by your side in the counting-house or the warehouse, but in the church of Christ, and in the committees of our religious societies.

Mothers, much devolves on you. Both among the rational and irrational tribes, the first training of the infant race belongs to her that gives them being, and supports them, and of course the first and afterwards the strongest yearnings of their affection are to her. It is her privilege and reward for pains, privations, and labours, all her own, to be thus rewarded by the earliest and most earnest aspirations of the heart. Avail yourselves of this bliss, and the influence it gives you, to mould the infant heart and character for God. Let a mother's vigilance, care, and affection, all be most earnestly consecrated to the blessed work of sowing the seeds of piety in childhood's heart, and thus forming the young immortal. Scarcely a character of eminence has ever appeared, either in the church or in the state, but has confessed his obligations to a judicious mother. Pious mothers have done more to people heaven than

any other class of persons, next to the preachers of the gospel; and even the usefulness of ministers must be shared with those who had prepared the minds of their converts to receive impression from their sermons. Napoleon once asked Madame Campan, what the French nation most wanted. Her reply was compressed into one word, "Mothers." It was a wise, beautiful, and comprehensive answer. Ask me what the Church of God wants next to earnest ministers, and I answer, intelligent, pious, earnest mothers.

CHAPTER VI.

EARNESTNESS IN CHURCHES AND THE DUTIES OF CHURCH MEMBERS.

I now use the word church in its limited sense, as restricted to one assembly or congregation, and meaning a regularly organized body, meeting with its office-bearers in one place for divine worship. And I have now, therefore, to shew in what manner the earnestness of such a community is to show itself.

There must of course be an intelligent and pervading apprehension amongst its members that its design, next to their own eternal well-being, is, or should be, that of a witness for God in the world, and his instrument for spreading his truth. This ought to be a well understood, deeply-rooted, and constantly recognized principle. All the members ought perpetually and conscientiously to bear in mind this their high vocation, as a testifying, proselyting body, and stir up each other's minds to carry out this their sacred and common purpose. They must not allow one another to forget that as a part of the universal church, they are a collective and embodied testimony to the existence, nature, will, and works of God.

To this must be added a consciousness of the great spiritual power for accomplishing this end which is con-

tained in a church of Christ; a power of which it ought to be, but is not, duly sensible. There is moral power in truth, in example, in prayer, in exertion. All these combine in every sincere, consistent Christian. Each believer in Christ is an instrument of great power in our world, or has great power in himself. He has a greater force of character than he has ever yet put forth, or has known himself to possess. Think what one Christian has in some extraordinary cases achieved. What an immense power then must there be in a church consisting of one, three, five, or seven hundred members! Take even a small church of only one hundred, and imagine them all eminently holy, benevolent and active, scattered all over the place in which they dwell, each a radiating point of light and influence in the neighbourhood where he lives. And then conceive of them collecting together periodically in their church relationship, to be seen as a body of witnesses for God, and to be acted upon by ministerial exercises and mutual influence: keeping each other up to the standard of obligation and the measure of duty. Let it be supposed that they were filled with this idea of spiritual power; that they assembled in their collective capacity to quicken and renew it, and then dispersed to employ it in their several localities.

There must also be a deep solicitude in each church to answer the end of its formation both in reference to its own internal state and its external relations.

I. The active operations of a church may be classed under several heads: the first class includes whatever appertains to its own welfare; for this must of course take precedence of all other duties. It is only as it is itself in a good, sound, healthy, and working condition,

that it can expect to be of any service to others. A church, as well as a state, must be strong internally, or it can have no power to be beneficial to others.

Every member of every community is supposed to feel, and to take, a deep interest in its welfare. The welfare of the whole depends upon the solicitous endeavour to promote it, on the part of its individual members. There is a common interest, and there must be a common activity to uphold it. Thus must it be with all church members, they must have an earnest, jealous, and ever wakeful solicitude for the well-being of the church to which they belong. They are not, indeed, to cherish an isolated, selfish spirit, which shuts up all their concern within their own congregation, but that is to be the object of their first and chief anxiety. It is their religious home, and every man's concern is to begin with home. It is not enough that they are cordially attached to the pastor, and take an interest in his comfort and usefulness; they must also feel an interest in the church. There can be no doubt that many of our members almost drop the church, and confine all their concern to the minister. They rarely ever attend the church-meetings, though they are always, or usually, present in the sanctuary: they know scarcely any of their fellow-members, and take little interest in their spiritual welfare, however intimate they are with the pastor: they are well pleased to see a good congregation on the Sabbath, though they scarcely ever inquire about additions to the church. They are like inhabitants of a country who have a personal attachment to the sovereign, but take no interest in the welfare of the nation. Such persons are not actually in fellowship, for they feel none: their names are upon the church-books, but

their hearts are certainly not in church communion. There is no earnestness in them. No brotherly love is in operation in their hearts.

A church should endeavour most diligently to carry out the ends of fellowship, which are mutual love, watchfulness, and helpfulness.

Love is the law of Christ's kingdom, the badge of his subjects, and the evidence of his mission: but there is not yet exhibited among church-members the intensity of affection which answers this design. Brother-love is yet far too feeble in its exercise. The church is sadly deficient in this lovely grace. The world does not yet see her invested with this heavenly beauty, and therefore does not feel her power as it would otherwise do. When the earnestness of love shall come, when they who look into the "spiritual house," shall see there a scene of holy activity, and all the assiduities of divine friendship, they will begin to think differently of the Christian religion from what they now do. For want of more of this love, there is not the Watchfulness over one another there should be, nor the disposition to bear one another's burdens. We are brought into fellowship, not that we may act as spies upon each other, and wait for a brother's halting, but that we may perform with the tenderest affection the part of monitors, and prevent each other from falling. We ought to feel it a most solemn and sacred duty to gather the stumbling-blocks out of each other's path, and prevent, as far as possible, even a trip in the way of godliness. Then is a church in a happy state when the members are observed watching in love with trembling solicitude over each other's welfare, and not sparing, when it is needed, the voice of friendly warning, or even the language of faith-

ful reproof. Where there is love, there will also be assistance; sympathy in affliction, congratulation in prosperity, relief in want, counsel in perplexity, and visits in distress. What a lovely scene would be presented to our selfish world, if the church of Christ were really in earnest to put forth in its conduct, as it is bound to do, "the charity that suffereth long, and is kind; that envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; that doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things!" Whatever else there may be, there is no real earnestness where there is no prevailing anxiety thus to carry out the ends of fellowship, and to let the world "see how these Christians love one another."

1. One of the first duties which a church owes to itself is, an intelligent, firm, and charitable zeal for the principles on which it is founded, both doctrinal, and such as relate to ecclesiastical polity. After what has been said in reference to the former in the remarks on the epistles to the seven churches, it is not necessary to enlarge upon it here, any further than to notice that it is of infinite importance for the churches to hold fast "the form of sound words," and not to be carried about with every wind of false doctrine, by which the spiritual atmosphere is so frequently disturbed. Truth is the food of piety, and error its poison. There can be no sound spiritual health apart from sound doctrine. And yet it is affecting to perceive how lightly, in this age of spurious candour and philosophy, of diminished spirituality and increased worldliness, some of the funda-

mental doctrines are held, and how easily the transition is made by some professors from one set of opinions to another. Let the members of our churches then look vigilantly after each other, and sustain each other in the profession of the faith. Let them not sacrifice the truth for talent, and be content with whatever deficiencies may exist with regard to the former, provided it is made up by a suppy of the latter. Nothing can be, or ought to be, a substitute for the evangelical system. Eloquent, but vague generalities, which would suit the taste, and not offend the prejudices, of a congregation of unitarians, or mere theists, should not satisfy an orthodox congregation: and let them be careful how they choose a man who, even in his probationary sermons, seems to have come from Athens, rather than Jerusalem; and to have brought them the enticing words of man's wisdom, instead of the doctrine of the cross, which is the power of God unto salvation. No brilliancy of genius, no fluency of speech, no power of oratory, should reconcile them to a suspicion of error, or even of deficiency of evangelical truth. The life and vigour of godliness can never be maintained by mere talent, in the absence of sound doctrine: and indeed the greater the talent the greater the danger, especially when such talent appears not only in alienation from, but in hostility to, the truth as it is in Jesus. It is a portentous sign for a Christian community, when it can be satisfied with mere displays of talent in the absence of Scriptural truth.

Nor is it about doctrine only that our congregations should be in earnest, but about matters of polity also. Church government, though not everything, nor the most important thing, is still something, and a great

thing too. It is a matter deeply affecting, in one way or other, not only the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, but the interests of evangelical religion: it is a help or a hindrance accordingly as it is conformed or opposed to the model set up in the New Testament; and is therefore worthy of all the zeal, apart however from bitterness, which sectarianism has manifested on its behalf. To reduce to nonentities, as regards value and importance, the questions about established or non-established churches, Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Independency, is a spurious and unauthorised latitudinarianism, as remote from a due regard to the authority of Christ in his word, on the one hand, as a bitter and venomous sectarianism is on the other. If Congregationalists are indifferent to their principles, they are the only body that is so. The advocates of other systems leave us no room to doubt of their earnestness, nor ought we to leave them in any doubt of ours. The principles which apostles taught, which reformers revived, and for which martyrs bled, ought not to be regarded with indifference by us. If they are not matters of conscience, they ought to be abandoned, since it is hardly worth while to stand in a state of separation for matters of mere taste or feeling: but if they are, then let them be held, as all matters of conscience ought to be, with a grasp that relaxes not even in death itself. If important to us, they are important to others, and ought to be propagated, as well as held. Liberty to hold an opinion is but the half of freedom, unless there be liberty to diffuse it. What I plead for on our own behalf, I plead for on behalf of all others. Only let us deprive controversy of its sting; only let us speak the truth in love; only let us argue as brethren, and not as enemies; only let

us contend for truth, not for victory; only let us carry on our contests about minor matters, with the recollection that we are agreed on greater ones; only let us wrestle for church polity within sight of the cross, which makes us all one, and of the heaven where we shall feel as one; only let us reason and expostulate as we should with a brother we most tenderly loved, about something he held which we thought was doing him harm, and then we may be as zealous as we please about church government. If an earnest dissenter be not a bigoted, uncandid, or pugnacious one, but one who has an intelligent preference founded on conviction, who holds fast his opinions without any compromise, and exhibits a zeal in spreading them, which though it affects no neutrality, yet violates neither the courtesy of the gentleman, the calmness of the philosopher, nor the charity of the Christian, then may all dissenters be thus in earnest, yes, and all churchmen too.

2. As the welfare of the church depends, under God's blessing, upon the labours of the pastor; and as the energy and efficiency of his labours depend upon the state of his own mind, it is indispensably necessary that he should be kept as free as possible from all solicitude about pecuniary matters. There are few matters about which the spirit of liberality in this age has been less conversant or less anxious, than the adequate and comfortable support of the ministry at home: and as a consequence, there are few functionaries so ill-supported as they on whom, under God, the whole cause of evangelization depends. Secretaries of societies, missionaries to the heathen, and schoolmasters, are all better paid, and have a more ample provision made for their comfort, than the preachers of Christ's gospel.

Preached sermons are the cheapest of all cheap things, in this age of exceeding cheapness. And yet what invaluable blessings have these sermons been to multitudes; by only one of them, in many cases, persons have been converted to God, and enriched with eternal salvation: many have been relieved of burdens of care which were crushing them to the earth: others have been rescued from a temptation which would have ruined them for both worlds: and myriads have been delivered from the fear of death, and enabled to go on their way rejoicing even through the dark valley itself. Yes, by a single sermon all this has in many cases been accomplished. What then shall be said of all the sermons of a whole year, or a whole life? Think of this, and say whether a payment of ten shillings or a pound a year, is an adequate remuneration to the man who consumes his life in study and in labour for the purpose of conferring such benefits as these? Is it not next to a miracle for a man to be all energy, activity, and earnestness, in his ministry, whose mind is bowed down with solicitude how to provide bread for his family, and at the same time to provide also things honest in the sight of all men? Christians, you want your pastor to run in the way of God's commandments to his ministers; then take off by your liberality the burden under which he can scarcely walk or stand. You complain that his sermons are poor and meagre: is it not your own fault by keeping him so poor and meagre in his wardrobe and in his larder, that the time which should, and would, have been spent in study, has been consumed in endeavouring to get that bread for his babes, with which you ought to have supplied him? If we would have earnest churches I know very well we must

have earnest ministers; but then, if we would have earnest ministers we must have liberal churches. What is wanted, is a provision for our pastors which shall not be so profuse as to be a temptation to luxurious indolence, and yet so ample as to raise them above anxiety.

3. If it be incumbent upon a church to provide for the comfort of a pastor, how much more so for his usefulness, by improving, enlarging, or rebuilding, when his success requires it, the house in which he ministers. Happily there is not in the present day much need for dilating upon this subject. One of the delightful features of this age is a noble spirit of liberal activity, at which our forefathers, were they to come back to life, would be astonished. The voluntary principle is doing wonders in this way, within the pale of dissent, and far greater wonders beyond it. Under its potency, inconvenient, dilapidated, and old-fashioned buildings have given place to modern, elegant, and commodious ones, in accordance with the improved taste of the day: and chapels have sprung up where there were none before. Parliamentary grants have been found to be unnecessary, and church rates, extorted by force and paid with reluctance, have been in many places superseded by spontaneous liberality. Still, it is not in every congregation we witness this generous activity, and churches are yet to be found, where through an almost superstitious regard for the places where their fathers worshipped, the present congregation are unwilling to touch a brick or a plank, and are well nigh ready to let the roof fall in and bury them, out of reverence for antiquity: or else out of niggardly regard to their purses they are content to let a faithful minister, who has ability to preach to a crowd who are anxious to hear

him, go on ministering to a small congregation, for which a man possessed of less than half his zeal or talent might suffice. I have known cases of both these hindrances to enlargements and re-erections, where the predilections for the antique have stifled the nobler predilections for the useful, and the ghosts of departed saints have been evoked to pronounce it sacrilege to demolish the pew in which they once offered up their prayers to God: whereas if the men themselves could have been really there, they would have said, "Down with every stone, to make way for a place where more souls may hear the gospel and be converted to God." Wealthy men have sometimes opposed the rebuilding of a place of worship, because they would be expected to set the example of liberality and give more than their love of money would find it agreeable to spare; and I have known opposition raised by poor, would-be-gentlemen, because they could not give, and yet had not the courage or the honesty to confess their poverty. It is a gratifying spectacle, and thanks to the Giver of all grace, not unfrequently witnessed, to see a church, not perhaps rich in this world's goods, blessed with a pious, zealous, and successful minister, and all activity, liberality, and earnestness, to enlarge the sphere of his usefulness by building him a new and more commodious place of worship. I have been the witness of some such cases which are as much beyond the belief, as they are beyond the practice, of those who are taught by system to rely on the compulsion of law, or the munificence of parliament, for their places of Divine worship.

4. A general, regular, and punctual attendance upon all the means of grace is essential to the earnestness of a Christian church. There is a wonderful difference

in this respect in the various congregations of professing Christians. In some instances you will see the hearers straggling along with a dull and careless look, as if they were going to an unwelcome service; dropping in to the place of worship long after the service has commenced; looking round with vacant stare upon the congregation, undevout and listless, as if they were there, they neither knew nor cared why; the seats half empty, and those who occupy them seemingly neither expecting nor desiring a blessing from above. There is no earnestness there. In other cases, how different; you will observe a stream of people, just before the hour of service, flowing into the place, with a serious, thoughtful, yet cheerful air, as if they knew what they were going for, and that it was a solemn yet gladsome occasion. They take their seats with a composed, collected, devout manner. A look of expectation is in their eye, which is first cast towards the pulpit, as if they waited for the preacher with his message from God, and then upward to that God who alone can make the message effectual. A stranger coming in is struck with the appearance of earnestness that pervades the congregation, and almost involuntarily exclaims, "How dreadful is this place, surely, this is the house of God, and the gate of heaven." Yes, and if he were to visit that place time after time he would see the same scene repeated; the same seats occupied by the same people, and in the same devout manner. The earnest hearer is the constant hearer, the punctual hearer, the devout hearer. There is creeping over the churches a spirit of indolence, self-indulgence, and mischievous negligence, in reference even to the Sabbath-day attendance, most fatal to fervent devotion, which arises from the modern taste for residing in

the country. Very many of the members of our religious communities of all denominations, go but once a week to the house of God; and this is on a Sabbath morning. All the rest of the holy day is spent in idleness, perhaps feasting and lounging over wine through the afternoon, turning over the pages of a magazine, with little devotion, and with no profit, in the evening. If these persons were in their closets, studying the word of God, engaged in self-examination and prayer, mortifying their corruptions, and invigorating their graces, we should think less of it, but is this their occupation? I fear this love of ease is eating out the piety of our churches, and gradually turning the Sabbath into a day of luxurious repose, instead of Christian devotion. Modern tastes are sadly at war with modern piety. It seems as if many of the professing Christians of the day were trying with how little attendance upon the ordinances of public worship, how little of self-denial, and how little a public manifestation of their religion, they could satisfy their conscience, and alas! how very little that is.

But this is not all, earnestness is displayed more commonly by the week-day attendance, than the Sabbath congregations. A professor of religion who has the least regard for his reputation must be at public worship once on the Lord's day, but he has no great reason as things exist, to fear for his religious reputation, at least in the estimation of many of his fellow Christians, who are too much like him, though he is never present at a week-day service. There is a phenomenon in my own church which I scarcely know how to explain, I mean that the attendance upon weekly services does not increase with the augmentation

of the church. I am not sure that we have more at a prayer meeting now, than we had when the church was only half its present number; and I observe that it is pretty nearly the same people who attend every time. This looks as if there were a great number of our members who have no sense of obligation to attend such services. But can we really consider those who habitually neglect them, to be very lively Christians; or in any way advancing in the divine life, unless indeed there be some special and sufficient reasons for their absence? Earnestness manifests itself in the way of laborious effort, a willingness to make sacrifices, and a disposition to endure self-denial; and if it characterised the religion of a church, it would display itself in a willingness to put ourselves to some little personal inconvenience to attend the services of the week-days, as well as the Sabbath-days.

5. There ought to be a cordial co-operation with the pastor in all his labours for the salvation of souls. He must be sustained in his endeavours to draw people to hear the gospel. The plan of District Visiting Societies, adopted of late years by the Evangelical portion of the clergy of the Church of England, is an admirable one, in which Christian and matronly ladies go round to the habitations of the poor, relieving their temporal necessities, distributing religious tracts, selling Bibles, and urging the people to attend church. How can female influence be better employed? That there may be a little Church-of-Englandism, a little dread of dissenters, mixed up with this zeal, is very probable: but let dissenters then imitate the plan, let the ladies of their congregations commence similar efforts, let them form visiting societies to assist their pastors, let them go to

those who attend no place of worship, and persuade them to come and hear their minister. It would be highly improper to tempt persons who already hear the gospel, to leave their own pastor to come to theirs; but if they find people who go nowhere, and belong to nobody, let them not scruple to induce them to come to their own place of worship. There need be no delicacy, no scruple, no fastidiousness, here. Every pious churchman will allow it is better these people should attend among dissenters, or methodists, than nowhere. There is no room for jealousy in these matters, while there are many millions in our country who never go to public worship at all, and who indeed, if all of them were disposed to do so, could not find a sufficient number of places to receive them. If every congregation were really bent upon filling its place of worship, and were not to leave it all to their minister, they would soon accomplish the object, and be astonished to see what crowds could be gathered. Yet how many of our hearers are there who will go on complaining for years that their minister does not draw a congregation to hear him, while all this time they have never attempted to bring one single individual to listen to his sermons! What an immediate effect would be produced, if fifty, or even ten, earnest persons were to turn out on a Sunday afternoon, to visit the streets, alleys, and courts in the vicinity of a place of worship, with a view to bring into it the persons who, in its very shadow, are neglecting to attend the worship of God, and to urge them to keep holy the Sabbath, and to seek the salvation of their immortal souls. I can never denominate a body of Christians an earnest church till it is roused to make such efforts as these; and till its mem-

bers, such of them, at any rate, as have leisure, are thus exerting themselves to compel the neglecters of public worship to come in, that God's house might be full. There are some persons who are not satisfied with not helping their pastors, but who actually hinder them in their schemes for doing good. I know a minister, who, as his galleries and other parts of the chapel appropriated to the poor, were not occupied as he wished, commenced an admirable course of sermons addressed to the labouring classes, with the special design of drawing their attention to his place of worship, and thus filling up the vacant seats. By many of the congregation who entered into his views, and were anxious for his usefulness, the plan was approved; but it will scarcely be credited, that by others it was disapproved of, and resented, because it took away from them an ordinary sermon, which they deemed more appropriate to themselves than an address to the labouring classes.

A man of powerful eloquence and splendid talents will, by God's blessing upon his labours, raise a congregation any where, without much co-operation on the part of the people; but such men are rare, and are not to be met with every day. Yet, without these qualifications, a man of good abilities, ardent piety, and great diligence, will also, by God's blessing, do any where, if he be sustained by the co-operation of a thoroughly working church. And it becomes our churches to recollect that such is now the competition of the different denominations, and especially such the activity and energy of the Church of England, that where the congregation is new, small, or diminished, there is little hope of its being raised to any thing like strength or stature, without the efforts of the whole

body; whilst on the other hand, if these efforts are made, there is no ground for despair.

An earnest church then, is one that is in such a state of activity as to be properly denominated a thoroughly working church. Its members will appear to be animated by one spirit, like the bees of a hive, all busy, each in his own department, and all adding to the common stock. In a community of this description, there will be a place for every body, and every body will know and keep his place. Care should be taken by the pastor in receiving members to impress upon them the noble idea, that a desire and an effort to be useful is a part of religion; and he should also endeavour to ascertain the talents, capabilities, and tastes for usefulness, of all whom he admits, and then assign to each his proper place and appropriate labour. Over the portals of every church should be this inscription, "Let no one enter here, who is not determined to be holy and useful."

In our large churches, an assistant minister, if not a co-pastor, is very desirable, and is becoming more and more necessary, in consequence of the increased energy of the clergy of the Church of England. Our single handed pastors can never, in matters out of the pulpit, cope with those who have one, two, or three curates employed under them. I am aware that the episcopal clergy have a mass of laborious duty in the way of baptisms, marriages, visitation of the sick, and burials, which, except to a comparatively small amount, does not devolve upon us dissenting ministers; but even with this our mitigated pressure, the sick are too much neglected, inquirers overlooked, and the young left to themselves. The pulpit cannot, must not, be neglected; and yet how can this be duly regarded, and pastoral

claims, with demands for public business, and the increased correspondence brought upon us by the penny postage be attended to by any one man, however quick in the dispatch of business, without assistance? We want help, and we must have it, or much of our work will be ill done, and much more left altogether undone. I do not forget the difficulties which present themselves; first of all on the ground of expense, and secondly on account of the probability of disagreement between the two ministers. To obviate the first of these is in the power, and ought to be in the will, of our people: and to meet the second, it might be well for the settled pastor to have the sole right of engaging and of dismissing the assistant, so as to be able at any time to stop incipient mischief. It must be remembered, I am not now speaking of a co-pastor; when that plan is determined upon, it must be by the church both as to the time when it is to come into effect, and the individual who is to be elected; but an assistant is a different matter, though even with reference to him, care should be taken by the pastor, especially if the assistant is to take a part in pulpit labours, to select such an one as will be acceptable to the people. The reluctance of some of our pastors to adopt this plan, I know is very great, from the hazard which it brings to the peace of the church. I am very well aware there is some danger of this, for it has come under my own observation to see the jars and discords of two ministers not only among ourselves as dissenters, but also in the Church of England. In the latter case, I admit, the risk is less on account of the exclusion of the suffrages, power, and influence of the people: and the difficulty in our case, it appears to me, would be in some measure obviated by allowing the

pastor to select and dismiss his own assistant. Would it not be for the advantage of our young preachers on leaving college, to finish their education for the pastorate under an experienced and successful minister? Time would thus be given to them to carry on their studies, and opportunity afforded to acquire a familiarity with the details of pastoral duties. This may be better than a co-pastorship, except in those cases where an aged minister would gladly aid in choosing his successor, and would thus have a good opportunity for doing it.

Next to this, the deacons should be looked to for much more efficient assistance than they are in the habit of rendering. I allow that their original appointment went no further than to the care of the poor; but the custom of our churches has thrown many other things into their hands. They, or some other spiritual and experienced persons, should be found to help the pastor in the spiritual, more private, and individual duties of his office, such as conversing with inquirers, comforting the distressed, and guiding the perplexed. Unhappily our deacons are usually men much immersed in business, who have little time for any thing but their own concerns: and more than this, some of them are men much occupied in the business of the town in which they live. But considering how solemn and responsible a thing it is to bear office in the church of Christ, and how momentous a community the church of Christ is, they ought either to resign their office as deacons, if they cannot discharge its duties, or else withdraw their attention from public business. A deacon, next to the pastor, should be the most earnest member of the church. He should be all energy and

devotedness, breathing by his words, and inspiring by his conduct, a spirit of love and activity into the souls of his fellow-members. He should be ardent without being rash, active without being obtrusive or officious, taking the lead not merely by choice, but by request, stirring up the liberality of the church by being first in all pecuniary exertions, and setting others on fire by the warmth of his own zeal. He should be his minister's counsellor, without being his dictator: his comforter, without being his flatterer; his helper, without being his master; and his friend, without being his partizan.

Still, as we cannot in all cases expect so much as this, or meet with all we could wish in deacons, there may be found in most of our churches a few spiritual and judicious persons who would be of essential service in the way of teaching some of our inquirers and young converts, "the way of God more perfectly." It is painful to think how much religious impression passes away, and how many deep and pungent convictions are allowed to be extinguished, for want of their being watched and cherished. There are many persons who would gladly avail themselves of the assistance of a kind-hearted, able, and willing instructor, guide, and comforter, though he were not an official. It is perfectly clear to any attentive student of the New Testament, that there was much more of division of labour in the primitive churches than there is in ours. If we refer to Rom. xii, 7, we find mention made of "ministering," "teaching," "exhortation," "ruling;" and it would seem as if these functions were severally discharged by different persons. So again in 1 Cor. xii, 28, we read of "governments," and "helps," as of something distinct from "teachers." The meaning of the word

"helps," is of very wide latitude, and as no hint whatever is given as to its precise application in this instance, we cannot determine to what function it refers. It was not probably a designation of an office, in the usual acceptation of that word, but merely a description of persons whose zeal and ability rendered them of great use in a variety of ways to the regular officers of the church. Why have we not more of these "helps" now? We certainly need them. And if we do not think it proper to revive the questionable office of deaconesses, why may we not have a band of matronly females, eminent at once for their piety and prudence, who shall be employed without the formalities of office, but under appointment by the pastor and deacons, to visit the sick members of their own sex, and to aid in the way of Bible classes the instruction of the young female inquirers? Perhaps the blame lies with the pastors that more collateral help of this kind is not obtained and employed. We are not wise in our generation, in finding out, and calling out, the help which must be obtainable in every large congregation. I never will or can believe that among those hundreds of enlightened minds, and renewed hearts, which are in our churches, there are not many who could in various ways be our assistants, and who would not rejoice, at being solicited to give us their help.

II. A second class of obligations and duties, or active operation, devolving upon a Christian community, relates to the neighbourhood in which it is placed. Every church is to be a "light of the world," and the "salt of the earth," in reference to its own locality. It should seek to exemplify the beautiful language of Jehovah, by the prophet, "I will make them and the places round

about my hill a blessing; I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing."

It is now a universal custom for every congregation to have its Sunday-school: this is considered so necessary an adjunct, that a congregation can scarcely be supposed to exist without it: and an earnest church will be earnest in its support of this kind of agency, which is so necessary for the wants of the people, and the morals and religion of the nation. And yet how few churches, as such, or their pastors, take the lively interest in them which they ought! How common is it to leave the whole school to its own self-management, which is in many cases to leave it to the direction of a few boys and girls, who in general are but slenderly qualified even to be led, much less to be leaders! It is affecting to consider how these valuable institutions are often managed or rather mismanaged. Not unfrequently have they punished both the pastors and the churches that have neglected them, by becoming seats of disaffection to the one, and means of division to the other. Left to themselves, the teachers formed a fourth estate, which perplexed, if not overawed, the other three: and yet, after all, they were less to blame than the pastor who thought them of too little consequence to be taken under his control, till their importance was felt in the way of mischief. A Sunday-school is not so much a part of the congregation, as another congregation by itself, and is well deserving of the devoted attention of both the pastor and his flock. It is a thing greatly to be desired that none but truly pious members of the church should be employed as teachers, and of them none but the wisest and the best: and it

often appears a wonder and a lamentation, that such an opportunity of doing good, should be put aside by so many persons who see it constantly within their reach.

It is of immense consequence that every Sunday-school should have the appendage of a Bible class for the senior boys and girls, into which they should be introduced as they become too old to remain in the ordinary classes. The question has often been asked, what is the best plan for the treatment of children of an age to leave the school? What? It is strange that such a question should be asked. And the answer can be immediately given; form Bible classes, to be superintended by pious, judicious, and devoted persons, who will give their hearts to the work, and who will combine with scriptural instruction a devoted and assiduous attention to the formation of their general and religious character. I speak from experience in recommending this scheme. We have long had such classes in our school, and blessed have been the results. It has been our felicity to have had ladies, and gentlemen too, who have given their time and labour to this work, and whose reward and happiness it is to see many whom it brought under their care become members of the church, and respectable members of society. One of the deacons of my church, a gentleman, whose mildness, intelligence, and firmness, eminently qualified him for the work, was long engaged in it, and lately acknowledged to me that he believed he was never so useful as when he was so engaged. Surely all our churches contain persons qualified for such employment, and could any object be selected more gratifying to a holy ambition, more interesting to a benevolent heart, or more fascinating to a sanctified imagination, than

such an occupation? There can be little earnestness indeed, if such agency be wanting.

It is not Sunday-schools alone that our churches must take up, but daily and infant schools: the former must not be neglected, but neither must they be substitutes for the latter. The cry for Education is raised in our country, and a noble cry it is. It is heard in the cabinet and in the senate, in the pulpit and on the platform, in the crowded city and in the sequestered village. The press in every department, and by every means, is keeping up the subject, and filling the land with the echoes of that mighty word, "Education! Education!" Christians should be the last to let the sound die away: they must be foremost in pouring light and life over the dark masses of our ignorant population, and must let it be seen that their religion hates darkness. Every church must have its day-school, and be considered behind its age, and lamentably defective in its apparatus of instruction and reformation, if there be no portion of the population under its general and moral training. Let a congregation neglecting this be looked at with wonder and reproach, as if it knew not the signs of the times, or heard not the call of God and our country to supplant the crimes and curses of ignorance and vice, by the virtues and the blessings of a sound education. In the glorious rivalry that is stirred up among all denominations for the education of the people, let every church consider itself lamentably deficient in earnestness if it has no share in the honour of this great undertaking. The people must be educated, ought to be educated, will be educated; and let us all contend who shall best and most effectually do the work.

Every working church will also have its Religious Tract Society, and thus call in the aid of the press to counteract the mischief which the press is continually doing by the other kind of publications which I have mentioned in a previous chapter. This is a means of doing good which requires so small a capital either for setting it up, or keeping it up, that no community of Christians, however small or however poor, can make, or find, an excuse for neglecting it. If only a pound a year can be raised, it will enable a few warm-hearted Christians to do much spiritual good: with even that limited amount of small arms, these spiritual Guerilla parties may do some execution in the holy war. It is painful to think how much this cheap and easy method of doing good is neglected, and even where it is not altogether neglected, how much it is left in the hands of those who are least fit for it. Where are our men of influence, and our females of standing in society, and what are they about? Is it a work beneath their dignity to carry the message of salvation into the cottages of the poor, and to scatter amidst the abodes of ignorance, vice, and misery, those leaves of the tree of life which are for the healing of the nations? Would it degrade them to go and read such a narrative, for instance, as that of "Poor Joseph," in the dark and dreary habitation where inmates as ignorant and as simple as he might be found, and who, like him, might be induced, and by God's Spirit enabled, to credit the "faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners?" Shall the sons and daughters of wealth leave the song of joy arising from the widow's joyful heart, and the blessing of him that was ready to perish, to be the portion and

bliss of the poor only? Why, O why do not all who have no family claims upon their attention, go forth on a Sabbath afternoon, with these messengers of mercy, into the scenes of ignorance, vice, and misery, in the vicinity of their own dwellings, and thus encounter the prince of darkness in his own battle-field, and fight him with weapons in size and shape like those with which he is slaying the souls of men?

In addition to this, how many in our warfare could, like artillery men, manage what might be called the great guns of Scripture, as Readers of the Word of God. Suppose every church had a Scripture-reading Society, formed of young or older men, or both, who would sally forth with the Bible, and obtain houses where they will be permitted to sit down, and read to the family alone, or to others with them that might be gathered in for the purpose. I ask not, in this case, for preachers, but simply for readers; an office for which nothing is wanted but a capacity to enunciate in an articulate and distinct manner, "the true sayings of God." This is a means of usefulness which almost every one could command: and it is no feeble one either. God's word is as fire, and as a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces. A single passage lighting on the judgment, heart and conscience, may be the power of God unto the salvation of the soul. Let us have faith in our Bibles, and believe that they are instruments adapted for their end. We must raise the Bible in public estimation; and what could do this more effectually than to go and read it to the people. How would it impress them with the value and importance of this precious volume, if they saw gentlemen and ladies ever coming to their habitations for the express

purpose of reading to them its contents. The plan of hiring suitable persons to devote their whole time to this work, is an admirable scheme, now much in vogue both in Ireland, and also among the evangelical clergy in this country, and will be productive, no doubt, of much good. But in one respect the unhired and unpaid services of persons who would give themselves to this labour, would be likely to produce a still deeper impression upon the minds of the labouring population, than stipendiary agents. In their case there would be no suspicion of sectarianism, no supposition that it was undertaken by the agents as a means of livelihood; but there would be a deep conviction of the generosity and kindness which could undertake such a labour, with no other fee or reward but that bestowed by the testimony of conscience, the approbation of God, and the gratitude of the objects. How is it so simple and so admirable a plan has not been more generally adopted? Just because it has not been brought forward into notice by those whose duty it is to suggest plans, means, and motives to the people for doing good. I mean their spiritual guides and instructors. Why might not every pastor have a band of these Scripture readers under his training, selecting for them week by week, the portions which they might read to the people, and illustrating these portions by such remarks as the readers might understand, remember, and repeat to those whom they visit.

III. There are duties which the churches owe to the country at large in the way of its more perfect evangelization. All the remarks on religious patriotism, made in a former chapter on individual effort for the conversion of souls, apply with equal force here. I cannot,

nor is it necessary I should, enter into a minute specification of all the various societies, so happily multiplied in this active age, to meet the various objects of Christian compassion and religious zeal; such as the British Missions for England, Ireland, and the Colonies, the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, the Seaman's Friend Society, the Religious Tract Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Although I would not abstract either time, attention, or money, from our foreign missions, and our labours for the conversion of the heathen, yet I would have more of all given to home. To talk of abandoning the whole heathen and Mahommedan world till this country is perfectly evangelized, is preposterous, and is usually the slang of those who do very little for either: and it will be found by an appeal to facts, that those who are most zealous in sending the gospel abroad, are the very men who are most active in spreading it at home. Still, it must be admitted that our own country has been too much neglected. Our own population are in a deplorable condition as to morals, religion, and education also: and it would be Quixotic indeed to seek the conversion of Chinese, Hottentots, and Polynesians, while our own neighbours were left to perish. To leave our homestead in an ill condition, and attend only to the extremities of the farm, is certainly not good husbandry. This is starting from the end, instead of the beginning. The order of benevolence is from particulars to generals, and from what is proximate to what is remote: and this rule should be observed in part, though not rigidly, in the present case. Besides the claims that our country has upon us, and besides the important fact that it is more under our influence than foreign lands, we should

recollect that all we do for home is, in an indirect manner, something done for other lands. By spreading religion here, we are raising friends and funds for foreign missions. Our churches and schools, as fast as they are formed, are pressed in as auxiliary to the missionary societies. No church, therefore, can understand its duties, or be exerting the proper influence which belongs to it, if it is not zealous in supporting all institutions that have the more perfect evangelization of our own country for their object. China, India, and all other heathen countries, must be, so to speak, converted in Britain, by multiplying here the instruments and means for converting them abroad.

IV. There are also the operations to be carried on for the conversion of the world, in support of our vast missionary schemes. This ought to be considered as the vocation of the church, the full and final development of her energies, and that for which she ought to prepare herself by all her other engagements. I know not that I could give a more beautiful exemplification of the spirit which ought to pervade our churches on this subject, than that which occurs in the life of Baxter. Towards the close of his holy and useful life, he set himself to review his history, to compare his then present with his former self, and to record the changes which time, reflection, observation, and experience, had made in his views, feelings, and conduct. Among many other most instructive things, we find the following :

"My soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of the miserable world, and more drawn out in desire for their conversion, than heretofore. I was wont to look but little further than England in my prayers, as not considering the state of the rest of the world; or if I prayed for the conversion of the Jews, that was almost all. But now as I better understand the case of the world, and the method of our

Lord's prayer, so there is nothing in the world that lieth so heavy upon my heart, as the thought of the miserable nations of the earth. It is the most astonishing part of all God's providence to me, that he so far forsaketh almost all the world, and confineth his special favours to so few: that so small a part of the world hath the profession of Christianity, in comparison with heathens, Mahommedans, and other infidels! And that among professing Christians there are so few that are saved from gross delusions, and have but any competent knowledge: and that so few are seriously religious, and truly set their hearts on heaven. I cannot be affected so much with the calamities of my own relations, or the land of my nativity, as with the case of the heathen, Mahommedan, and ignorant nations of the earth. No part of my prayer is so deeply serious as that for the conversion of the infidel and ungodly world, that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven: nor was I ever so sensible before, what a plague the division of languages is, which hindereth our speaking to them for their conversion: nor what a great sin tyranny is, which keepeth out the gospel from most of the nations of the world. Could we but go among Tartarians, Turks, and heathens, and speak their language, I should be but little troubled for the silencing of eighteen hundred ministers at once in England, nor for all the rest that were cast out here, and in Scotland, and in Ireland; there being no employment in the world so desirable, in my eyes, as to labour for the winning of such miserable souls; which maketh me greatly honour Mr John Eliot, the apostle of the Indians in New England, and whoever else have laboured in such a work."

Such were the holy effusions poured forth in his solitude by this holy and eminent man, when looking at things in the light of opening heaven and coming eternity; a situation so favourable to the clear and vivid perception of divine truth. I know not where to look, among all modern missionary sermons or speeches, for anything more eloquent, more touching, or more instructive, than this. Baxter lived in an age when no missionary societies existed, and when he could only lament the condition of the heathen world, and pray for their conversion; and oh, how intense were his feelings,

how fervent his prayers! Could he have prophetically anticipated the scenes of our May meetings, in what rapturous strains would he have congratulated the blessed generation who were honoured to bear a part in such transactions; and yet of this generation, with all their activity, how few are there whose zeal can compare with his for purity or ardour! Which of us, in our most devoted seasons, can emulate the deep emotion of those affecting paragraphs? Baxter was then silenced from his beloved work of preaching the gospel, by that rancorous and relentless spirit of persecution, which had arraigned, condemned, and imprisoned him as a culprit; and yet to hear him say in such circumstances, that he was not so affected by his own sufferings, or the sufferings of his relatives and his country, as by the condition of the heathen! To hear him say that he should not regret the silencing of two thousand witnesses for God in these realms, if they could but go and bear their testimony in foreign lands! To hear him mourning over tyranny, not because it robbed him of his rights and immured him in a jail, but because it shut out the gospel from perishing souls! Oh, where shall we find anything like this, in all the most heroic and self-denying instances of missionary zeal in the day or the country in which we live? Friends of missions, see here a pattern, at once to instruct, reprove, and stimulate you. Here is individual zeal, no waiting for others; closet zeal, no mere platform stimulus; prayerful zeal, no self-sufficient activity; serious zeal, no levity, no frivolity, no laughter-loving interest; self-denying zeal, manifested in a willingness to surrender the dearest rights of humanity, so that the gospel could be preached to the heathen; no putting off the cause

with the mere parings of his comforts; and all founded upon an intelligent and considerate acquaintance with the condition of its object. Then, when such a zeal as this pervades our churches, when each Christian apart, and each family apart, takes up the subject on such grounds, and with such solicitude as this; when the missionary fire is thus kept burning upon the altars of our hearts, fed by meditation and fanned by prayer; when our trials press not so heavily upon us as the miseries of the heathen; when liberty seems chiefly precious because it gives us an opportunity to preach the gospel to the heathen; and when even literature is valuable most of all because it aids us in translating and preaching the Word of God; then, when the unconverted world is felt to be the great misery, and a converted one to be the great desideratum; then will the Spirit be poured out from on high, and the world in answer to the prayers of the church, be converted to Christ.

The present organization of missionary societies is the best, perhaps, that the circumstances of our times allow, and well deserves the support of all the friends of the Redeemer and his cause, till God shall shew unto us "a more excellent way." That he will do so, I have little doubt. We are only in the childhood of our missionary growth, and when we have reached our manhood, shall give up as the childish things of our early years, much that we are now doing. More of God, and less of man, will appear. The churches of Christ will then, probably, themselves be the missionary societies of the day, instead of one vast, and to a certain extent, unwieldy organization embracing a whole denomination. Missionaries will go out as members,

representatives, and messengers of these bodies of Christians at home: and much of the machinery of our present social arrangements will be laid aside as cumbersome and artificial, for a mode of operation characterized by the simplicity of primitive times. This, however, must be left for Divine Providence to accomplish, and it will, no doubt, in this instance, as well as in every other, verify the truth of that sublime declaration, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

What the churches have now to do, is to go on with increased zeal, liberality, and prayer, in the great work of sustaining their respective societies, which are labouring, and not without the token of God's blessing, for the conversion of the world.

I may devote a few remarks here on two points as strictly appropriate to the subject of this chapter, female agency and public collections.

With regard to the first of these, I confess that while I do not wish to dispense with it altogether, for this is not possible, and if it were, would not be right, I feel jealous lest it should in any measure impair that retiringness of manner, that unaffected reserve, that modesty of demeanour, and that delight in home, which are woman's chief loveliness, and the sweetest fascination of her charms. Should the modern practice of employing females so extensively in our religious institutions make them bold, obtrusive, and fond of publicity, it will be corrupting society at its source, by spoiling them for wives and mothers, however it may fit them to be the instruments of benevolent organization. Whatever

impairs the beauty, or diminishes the strength, of the home virtues, though it may aid the operations of public institutions, is radically mischievous, and cannot be compensated by any benefit which can be secured, of any kind, or for any object. It is always revolting to my sense of propriety to see a young girl of sixteen or eighteen, pacing a street, knocking at door after door, entering shops, offices, and counting-houses, and addressing herself in the character of a beggar, to any one, and to every one, not excepting young men. Such things are not unknown, perhaps not uncommon. Ministers should be very careful how they employ young females, and take especial care, when it cannot be avoided, to exert all their influence to repress a spirit of levity and folly, and the least approach to impropriety; and to diffuse an air of seriousness and gravity over all that is done in this way, and by such agents. Judicious mothers should be much upon the alert in exercising a salutary vigilance over their daughters, and in resisting every attempt to engage them in services which may have the least tendency to despoil them of their modesty, simplicity, and love of home.

The following appropriate remarks are from an article in the Quarterly Review, on "The Life of Mrs Fry:"

"The high and holy duties assigned to woman by the decrees of Providence, are essentially of a secret and retiring nature: it is in the privacy of the closet that the soft yet sterling wisdom of the Christian mother stamps those impressions on the youthful heart, which, though often defaced, are seldom wholly obliterated. Whatever tends to draw her from these sacred offices, or even abate their full force and efficacy, is high treason against the hopes of a nation. We do not deny that valuable services may be safely, and are safely, rendered by many intelligent and pious ladies, who devote their hours of leisure and recreation to the Raratongas and Tahitis of

British Christendom; it is not to such we would make allusion: our thoughts are directed to that total absorption which, plunging women into the vortex of eccentric and self-imposed obligations, merges the private in the public duty, confounds what is principal with that which is secondary, and withdraws them from labours which they alone can accomplish, to those in which they can at least be equalled by others."

Great care should also be taken, when it is thought proper to employ the agency of children in collecting money by cards or otherwise, that no injury be done to their young minds, in destroying that humility, simplicity, and artlessness, which are the ornament of childhood, and in fostering a spirit of vanity, and a habit of obtrusive forwardness in their manners. It is a doubt with some persons whether this practice should be countenanced at all.

Public collections are a subject of immense importance: much that is going on in the world, for its conversion to God, depends upon them; and the life, activity, and earnestness of a church, must be estimated in some measure by the readiness and liberality with which they are made. This plan is an easy and expeditious method of raising money, and is perfectly consonant with all the principles of the New Testament. These collections have become of so much consequence that it seems almost necessary to systematize them. Some attempt and approach to this has been made by the plan among the Congregational churches, to collect on the last Sabbath in October for the British missions: but a far more perfect scheme is adopted, under the power of Conference, among the Wesleyans, by which I believe certain prescribed objects are collected for on certain days throughout the whole denomination. We, as Congregationalists, and indeed other bodies of Chris-

tians, are not subject to any such authority as this: the independence of our churches does not allow it. In Ireland, collections are made after every sermon, it being understood that copper only is expected ordinarily, and silver at stated and well-known times. In Scotland, opportunity is given to the worshippers as they go into the sanctuary, to deposit their offerings every Sabbath, in plates held to receive them at the door.

The greater part of the denominations in this country, both established and unestablished, have no system whatever, beyond an arrangement, which some congregations make at the beginning of the year, concerning the objects they will collect for during the ensuing twelve months; and the standing rule as to time with some of them is to have a collection for some object every month. My own opinion is that generally speaking we have too few collections, an idea which perhaps will be startling to some, who think we have already too many. A "collection" is a very vague term, it may mean an effort to raise a large sum, or it may mean only the gathering up of the smaller offerings of the people: our congregations, if they attach to it only the former idea, may well shrink from the multiplication of such efforts: but suppose a collection implied, as it does except on occasions, in Ireland and Scotland, only the giving of a sixpence or a penny, such collections might be multiplied indefinitely, without oppressing any one: for who would be impoverished by a sixpence, or a penny, even every week? Suppose, then, we had a graduated scale of collections. The first class actually requiring an effort, for the Missionary Society for instance, or for any other paramount object, when every body would be expected to give their largest sums: the

second class requiring only half this effort, for British missions, or anything else the congregation might determine upon: the third class requiring no effort at all, but merely the smaller sums. Now it is the multiplication of this third class, that I allude to, which would oppress no one, and yet if generally made, would raise a large sum for various objects that now receive very inadequate help. What an amount would be raised by a sixpence or only a single penny being asked for from the individuals composing our whole denomination. And if it were announced when the object is mentioned that it comes under the first, second, or third class collection, the people would then know what was expected from them in the way of contribution.

This scheme will be thought by some to be liable to objection: first, as being fanciful; but if it be effective we need not mind that. Secondly, it would often lead into difficulty under what class to place an object; but there is already such a classification, though not so systematically arranged and designated: for who gives as much to the Seaman's Friend Society, or to the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, or to the Moravian Missions, or to many other objects that could be mentioned, as they do to the London Missionary Society, or to British Missions? The objects classify themselves. But it will be said, this will restrict benevolence. By no means, for no one need be tied down to the sixpence or penny: if they choose to give more, it is perfectly at their option to do so, but they are not asked for more. And then as to giving dissatisfaction to those societies which would only get into the third class; many of them would gladly get there, rather than not get into any one. Let them have only the

smaller gatherings from all the churches, throughout the country, and they would account themselves much better supported than they are at present. But the multiplication of collections, it may be said, would spoil the ministrations of the sanctuary, and make us weary of hearing about Societies. So it would if there was to be a long statement made about each; but not if a mere simple announcement was made, and very little said about the matter, leaving the thing to commend itself to every man's judgment, for no one would want a long appeal which was to get only so small a sum from him.

This plan would suit small congregations as well as large ones, which are apt to excuse themselves from doing anything, because they cannot do much. It is a plea often used by a congregation that the little they can raise is not worth sending: but if they would consider how a multiplication of these small sums makes a large one, they would see that they ought not to be deterred by the consideration of their paucity and poverty. Such a plan as I now recommend would save the trouble, expense, and inconvenience of deputations, at least to a considerable extent. Not that I think they can be entirely dispensed with, though it is high time they were reduced within a much narrower compass than they occupy at present. They are a waste of public money, a disparagement to resident ministers, a hindrance to the duties of the pastorate, a pandering to a vicious appetite for novelty and excitement, and a means of rendering churches dissatisfied with their own pastors, by their being thus brought into comparison, not to say contrast, with the strangers who visit them.

The whole system of modern evangelization partakes far too much of the noisy, the showy, the ostentatious,

and vain glorious. We are not content to work, but we must talk so much about what we do: there must be such endless speechifying, such blowing of trumpets, such parade of names and sums and operations, that it looks as if it were not the doing of the thing upon which we were intent, but telling what we have done, and priding ourselves upon it. And why is all this, but because our passions rather than our principles are at present engaged in the work; because our tastes rather than our convictions are employed; because motives have less to do with these matters, than impulses. We want a deeper sort of piety in our churches, a more realizing sense of the claims of Christ, the value of the soul, the misery of men without the Gospel, and the great ends and obligations of the Christian profession. If the love of Christ constrained us, if no man lived to himself, if we felt that for every farthing of property we were accountable to God, and were habitually looking on to the day of account, we should not want such instrumentality as is now employed; or at any rate should want much less of it.

But we now return to the idea that an earnest church is a working church. Churches as well as individuals have their character; and an honourable one it is for either, to be known as always busy in doing good. Religious communities may be divided into four descriptions, in regard of their prevailing character. The first consists of those in which an apparent, and perhaps it may be but an apparent, high degree of spirituality exists; the preacher is devout, and his sermons partake of his own habitude of thought and feeling; the people, like the pastor, are thought to be, and perhaps are, professors of a higher tone of piety than

many others; and there is much of the divine life, in one of its phases, there; but although numerous and wealthy, they do nothing, or nothing in proportion to their ability, for the cause of Christ. Their collections are few and small: they are not at all known as engaged in any of the great societies of the day. They seem to suppose their calling to be to luxuriate on gospel privileges, to enjoy a perpetual feast of fat things; but they appear to think they have no vocation to proclaim the word of the Lord; or at any rate they consider themselves as something like the Jewish church, a stationary witness for God.

The second description of our churches is that of the communities of Christians where there is perhaps less of spirituality, less of the unction and the odour of doctrinal theology, either in the pastor or the flock, though their spiritual life is by no means low in comparison with many others; but with them all is activity and energy, the pastor is devoted not merely to his people but to the cause of God at large. The collections are numerous and great. The church can be depended upon, and is looked to for assistance by the directors of our Institutions. All hands are busy in Sunday and daily schools, tract distribution, working parties, Bible classes, and organizations for home and foreign societies; all that know them think and speak of them as a thoroughly working church.

The third description applies to those who are neither the one nor the other of the foregoing; they have lost their spirituality and have not gained a character for activity; they neither enjoy the life of godliness nor diffuse it, they have not even a name to live, but are dead.

The fourth description includes those, (alas ! how few they are,) who unite earnest spirituality with activity and liberality no less eminent; whose spiritual life is all healthfulness and vigour, and in whom its developments are seen in all the operations of holy zeal. This then is what we want, churches in which the vital principle of piety shall be so strong that they may be said to be like the mystic wheels of Ezekiel, instinct with the Spirit of God and ever in motion; churches whose activity, like that of the strong and healthy man, is the working of a life too vivacious to remain in a state of indolence and repose; churches so filled with the Spirit, that his gracious influence is perpetually welling up and flowing over in streams of benevolent activity for the salvation of the world; churches partaking of so much of the mind of Christ that from their own internal constraint, they must, like him, be ever going about doing good. Oh that God would pour out his Spirit, and raise every separate fellowship of believers to this blessed state of spiritual prosperity !

CHAPTER VII.

CIRCUMSTANCES REPRESSING EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

Such a state of the church as that to which this volume refers, cannot be rationally looked for without intense solicitude, importunate and incessant prayer, resolute effort, and both a vigorous and watchful opposition to hostile influence. This malign influence is exerted in various ways, and from various quarters. Of course the chief hindrance is from the remains of corruption in the heart of every Christian, and the efforts of Satan; and they must be overcome by a more determined and severe mortification of our members which are upon the earth, and a more unrelenting crucifixion of the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof: as well as by sobriety and vigilance of mind in resisting the temptations of our adversary the devil. But I now refer more especially to certain impediments arising out of the state both of the church and of the world.

I. Perhaps we may consider the easy access to church fellowship which is now so generally granted, as one cause of the deterioration of the piety of this day. I am aware that the admission of members to our churches is a subject of perplexing difficulty: it is not at our option to make the door of ingress to the church,

and of approach to the table of the Lord either wider or narrower than it is made by him to whom both the spiritual house, and the table for the inmates, belong. But the difficulty lies in knowing exactly what is his will on the subject, in each particular case as it occurs. For my own part, it is to me a heavy burden to determine in each case upon this point: no part of my duty is so perplexing. I am afraid on the one hand to repel the true convert, and deprive him of the means of nourishment and growth; and on the other, of admitting the self-deceived, and being thus the abetter of his delusion and destruction. Two consequences result from the reception of unsuitable persons to communion; they not only are confirmed themselves in their false views of their own case, but by their low state of pious feeling, or total destitution of it, by their worldly-mindedness and laxity, they corrupt others, and exert a deadening influence upon the whole community. Their example is a source of corruption to very many, who are allured by it into all their secularities and fashionable follies. One family of such worldly and lukewarm professors is often a grief to the pastor, a lamentation to the spiritual part of the flock, a snare to many of the less pious, and a reproach to the church at large. Too many of this description find their way, in these days of easy profession, into all our churches. I have arrived, therefore, at the conclusion that our tendency in this day is to make the standard for admission too low, and the test of spiritual fitness too easy. The consequence of this is that our churches have many in them who are professors only, and who exert an unfavourable influence over those of whom we hope better things. They benumb by their torpedo touch those with whom they come into

contact. It is probable that there is no pastor who, upon looking round upon his church, does not see many members, whom, if they had manifested no more concern when they made application for membership than they now do, he would have never thought of receiving into communion, and they indeed would never have applied for it themselves. How much is it to be wished that such persons, if they do not improve, would dissolve their connexion with the church, since their remaining only corrupts it, without doing anything for themselves, but to harden their hearts, aggravate their guilt, and increase their condemnation!

II. There are few things which exert a more unfavourable influence upon the piety of our churches than the mixed marriages between those who are professors of religion, and those who are not; and which it must be acknowledged and regretted, are in the present day lamentably common.

The operation of such unions on the state of religion, so far as regards the parties themselves, needs be no mystery to any one. When two individuals of different tastes, in reference to any matter, are associated, and one of them has an aversion, or even an indifference, to the pursuits of the other, it is next to impossible for the one so opposed to sustain with vigour and perseverance his selected course of action; and then if he cannot assimilate the taste of the other party to his own, he must for the sake of harmony give up his cherished predilections. This applies to no subject with such force as it does to religion. Every Christian man carries in his own heart, and encounters from surrounding circumstances, sufficient resistance to a life of godliness, without selecting a still more potent foe to piety in an

unconverted wife. Conceive of either party, in such an unsanctified union, continually exposed, if not to the actual opposition, yet to the deadening influence of the other. Think of a religious wife, to put it in the mildest form, not persecuted indeed by an irreligious husband, (though this is often the case,) but left without the aid of his example, his prayer, his co-operation: hindered from a regular attendance upon many of the means of grace which she deems necessary for keeping up the life of godliness in her soul; obliged to be much in company for which she has no taste, but positive aversion; and to engage in occupations which she finds it difficult to reconcile to her conscience, or harmonize with her profession; hearing no conversation, and witnessing no pursuits but such as are of the earth, earthly; ridiculed, perhaps, for some of her conscientious scruples, and doomed to hear perpetual sneers cast upon professors for their inconsistency; or what is still more ensnaring, constantly exposed to the deleterious influence of an unvarying, but at the same time, unsanctified amiability of disposition in her husband, whose want of piety seems compensated by many other excellences; is it likely, unless there be a martyr-like piety, not often found in such a situation, that amidst such trials she will continue firm, consistent, and spiritual? Will she not, if possessed only of the average degree of piety, relax by little and little, till her enfeebled and pliable profession easily accommodates itself to the wishes and tastes of her unconverted husband?

But, perhaps, the influence on religion generally is still worse when the husband is a professor, and the wife is not; worse, because he is more seen and known; has more to do with church affairs; has greater power over

others, and therefore may be supposed to be more injurious or beneficial, accordingly as his personal piety is more or less vigorous and consistent. When such a man unites himself with a female whose tastes and habits are opposed to spiritual religion; who is fond of gay company and fashionable amusements, and would prefer a party or a rout to a religious service; who feels restless, uneasy, and discontented in religious society and occupations; who has no love for family devotion, and is often absent from the morning or evening sacrifice; is it likely the husband of such a woman will long retain his consistency, his fervour, his spirituality? Will he not for the sake of connubial happiness, concede one thing after another till nearly all the more strict forms of godliness are surrendered, and much of its spirit lost? His house becomes the scene of gaiety, his children grow up under maternal influence, his own piety evaporates, and at last he has little left of religion but the name. And now what is his influence likely to be upon others? What families usually spring from such marriages; and what churches are, by a still wider spread of mischief, formed by them? This practice is ever going on before our eyes, and we feel unable to arrest it. It was never more common than at this time. Notwithstanding the protests which have been lifted up against it, the evil is continually spreading; and while it too convincingly proves the low state of religion amongst us, is an evidence of the truth of the last particular, that our present practice in the admission of persons to membership is far too lax. Too few of the female members of our churches would refuse an advantageous offer of marriage on the ground of the want of religion in the individual who makes the pro-

posal: and how many of the opposite sex would allow their conscience, on the same ground, to control their fancy, and give law to their wishes? Can we wonder that there should be little intense devotion in our churches, in such a state of things as this? How can we look for earnest piety when such hindrances as these are thrown in the way of it? Honourable and noble exceptions, I admit, there are. Among others, one especially have I known, where a female by consenting to marry an ungodly man, could have been raised with her fatherless children from widowhood, solicitude, suspense, and comparative poverty, to wealth, ease, and grandeur; but where, with martyr-like consistency, she chose rather to struggle on for the support of herself and her children, with the smile of conscience and of God to sustain her noble heart, than to accept the golden bait under the frown of both. But how few are there who would thus account the reproach of Christ greater treasure than all the riches of Egypt.

It is difficult to know what to do with this evil. Some churches make it a matter of discipline, and expel the member who marries an individual that is not a professor. This is the well-known practice of the Quaker body; and also of some churches of the Congregational order. There are objections, however, against this, which I have never yet been able to surmount. A member, whether suspended or excommunicated, can never be restored except upon a profession of penitence. Now, though in this case there can be no reformation, since the married cannot re-marry, there may be repentance: yet it is a delicate affair, as affecting his wife, to bring a man to say he is sorry he ever married; unless indeed we separate, by a refined abstraction, the

act of marrying an ungodly person, from his act of marrying this particular woman. Instances may occur, and have occurred in my own pastorate, of so very flagrant a nature, indicating so total a want of all sense of religious truth, feeling, and propriety, as to warrant, and indeed require, a church to exscind a person who had thus violated every rule of Scripture and of common decorum. In all cases of this description, the pastor should interfere before the connection is fixed, if he have an opportunity. He should point out the inconsistency to the church member, the peril that must inevitably ensue to the soul, and the all-but uniform and considerable unhappiness that attends such marriages; and in the case of such flagrant impropriety as I have last mentioned, let him candidly state the probability of exclusion from the church.

III. I may mention as the next hindrance to earnest piety, the taste for amusement by which the present day is perhaps characterised more than most which have preceded it. Every age has had its sources of pleasure, and its means and methods of diversion, to relieve the mind from the fatigue and oppression of the more serious occupations of life. The human mind cannot be kept always upon the stretch, nor can the heart sustain, without occasional relief, its burden of care; and I would not rob the soul of its few brief holidays, nor condemn as irrational or unchristian, its occasional oblivion of worldly vexations amidst the beauties of nature, or the pleasures of the social circle.* There is

* Two or three of the particulars of this chapter have been touched upon in the volume upon "An Earnest Ministry;" but as they still more intimately relate to the congregation, they are reintroduced here.

a time to laugh as well as to weep. It is highly probable that with the advance of civilization, and of the arts and sciences, man, instead of rendering himself independent of the lighter amusements, will actually multiply them. And it must be admitted that modern taste has by its elegance supplanted some of the gross carnality and vulgar joviality of former days. There is an obvious reformation and elevation of popular amusements. The low taste for brutal sports, is I hope supplanted by a higher kind of enjoyment, which, if not more christian, is at any rate more humane and rational, and this is something gained to morals, even where the improvement does not go on to religion. Still, it may be seriously questioned, whether among professing Christians, the propensity for entertainments has not been growing too fast, and ripened into something like a passion for worldly pleasures. Dinner parties, among the wealthier classes of professors, have become frequent and expensive: wines the most costly, and viands the most various are set forth with a profusion which proves at what an outlay the entertainment has been served up to gratify the vanity of the host, and the palate of his guests. There is an interesting incident in point, mentioned in the life of Mr Scott, the commentator, which I shall here introduce, as showing the light in which that eminent man viewed this subject. I am not quite sure I have not introduced it in one of my other works; if I have, it will bear repetition.

"For some time I had frequent invitations to meet dinner parties formed of persons professing religion, and I generally accepted them: yet I seldom returned home without dissatisfaction, and even remorse of conscience. One day, (the Queen's birth-day,) I met at the house of a rather opulent tradesman, a large party, among whom were some other ministers. The dinner was exceedingly splendid and luxurious,

consisting of two courses, including every delicacy in season. Some jokes passed upon the subject; and one person in particular, a minister of much celebrity, said, 'If we proceed thus, we shall soon have the gout numbered among the privileges of the gospel.' This passed off very well: but in the evening, a question being proposed on the principal dangers to which evangelical religion is exposed in the present day, when it came to my turn to speak, I ventured to say that conformity to the world among persons professing godliness was the great danger of all. One thing led to another, and the luxurious dinner did not pass unnoticed by me. I expressed myself as cautiously as I could consistently with my conscience, but I observed that however needful it might be for Christians in superior stations to give splendid and expensive dinners to their worldly relations and connexions, yet when ministers and Christians met together, as such, it was not consistent, but should be exchanged for more frugal entertainments of each other, and more abundant feeding of the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. Probably I was too pointed; and many strong expressions of disapprobation were used at the time; but I went home as one who had thrown off a great burden from his back, rejoicing in the testimony of my conscience. The consequence was, a sort of tacit excommunication from the circle. The gentleman at whose house this passed, never invited me again but once, and then our dinner was literally a piece of boiled beef. He was however a truly pious man, though misled by bad examples and customs. He always continued to act towards me in a friendly manner, and though I had not seen him for several years, he left me a small legacy at his death."

There are few who will not be of opinion that Mr Scott's rebuke would have been conveyed with more propriety, had it been administered privately, when it would manifest all the fidelity, without any of the seeming rudeness, with which it was given. Yet how convincingly does it prove the clearness of his perception of what was right, the tenderness of his conscience in shrinking from what was wrong, and the strength of his moral courage in reproving what he deemed to be a fault! What would Scott have said of a professor of religion exhibiting two-and-thirty different sorts

of wine upon his table and side-board at the same time!*

But it is not the dinner party, so much as the evening rout, that is becoming the prevailing custom

* When will the ministers and members of our churches begin generally to inquire, whether it is not expedient for them, if not for their own sakes, yet for the sake of the community, to discontinue altogether the use of intoxicating liquors? When it is considered that one-half of the insanity, two-thirds of the abject poverty, and three-fourths of the crime of our country, are to be traced up to drunkenness; that more than sixty millions are annually spent in destructive beverages; that myriads annually die the drunkard's death, and descend still lower than the drunkard's grave; that thousands of church members are every year cut off from Christian fellowship for inebriety; that every minister of the gospel has to complain of the hindrance to his usefulness from this cause; and that more ministers are disgraced by this than by any other habit; that, in short, more misery and more crime flow over society from this source, than from any other, war and slavery not excepted; and that by the highest medical authorities these intoxicating drinks are reduced as diet, from the rank of necessaries to luxuries; it surely does become every professor of religion to ask whether it is not incumbent upon him, both for his own safety and for the good of his fellow-creatures, to abstain from this pernicious indulgence. On the authority of Mr Sheriff Alison it is stated, that in the year 1840, there were in Glasgow, amongst 30,000 inhabited houses, no fewer than 3010 appropriated to the sale of intoxicating drinks. The same gentleman declared that the consumption of ardent spirits in that city amounted to 1,800,000 gallons yearly, the value of which is £1,350,000. No fewer than 30,000 persons go to bed drunk every Saturday night: 25,000 commitments are annually made on account of drunkenness, of which 10,000 are of females. Is Glasgow worse than many other places? Professors of religion, ponder this: and will you not by abstaining from a luxury, lend the aid of your example to discountenance this monster crime, and monster misery? It is in the power, and is it not therefore the duty, of the Christian church to do much to stop this evil, which sends more persons to the mad-house, the jail, the hulks, and the gallows, more bodies to the grave, and more souls to perdition, than any other that can be mentioned? Can the church be in earnest till it is prepared to make this sacrifice?

and the snare of modern Christians, when large assemblages are convened, comprising pious and worldly, grave and gay, young and old; not to enjoy "the feast of reason, and the flow of soul;" not perhaps even to be regaled by the pleasures of music, but by the amusement of the song and the dance: when large expense is incurred, late hours are kept, and every thing but a spirit friendly to religion is promoted. It is this kind of social amusement, the fashionable full-dress evening party, carried to the extent of entire conformity to the world, and frequently resorted to, that is injurious to the interests of vital godliness in our Christian churches. But even where there is not this extreme of gaiety, and a somewhat more sober aspect is thrown over the circle, yet when the winter passes off in a round of evening assemblages for no higher occupations than music and singing, it is an occupation scarcely congenial with the religious taste, or friendly to the promotion of religious improvement. I have known young people, professors of religion too, who have related with gleeful boasting, as if this were the element in which they delighted to live, the number of evenings during one winter they have passed in company, and in such occupations as have been just alluded to.

Now it may be, and it is, extremely difficult, and no one would attempt to solve the problem, to determine what kind of parties, and what number of them, are compatible with true godliness, so that when the rule for this kind and this number of entertainments is transgressed, the religion of the individual is questionable, or must be injured. I can only lay down general principles, leaving the application of them to individual judgment. There are no doubt persons

of such strength of real inrooted piety, of such strong devotional taste, and such fixed habits of godliness, that they could pass unhurt through a constant round of seemingly dissipating amusements; just as there are persons of such strong constitutions and such robust health, that they can breathe a tainted atmosphere, or even take some kinds of poison, without injury. There is a most striking instance of this lately published by the Bishop of Oxford, in the Life of Mrs Godolphin, who preserved not only her personal purity, but an unusual degree of spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, amidst the endless gaieties and the revolting licentiousness of the court of Charles the Second. In reference to which we can only say, "To the pure, all things are pure." But most certainly the average piety of our day is not of such robustness as to be able to resist strong contagion. The very craving after diversion, which there is in some persons, shows a morbid state of the soul. It might be supposed, judging from the representations of true religion which we find in the word of God, and from the general principles contained in it, as well as from the recorded experience of the saints, which is to be found in religious biography, that a Christian, one who is really such, has been rendered independent of all such sources of enjoyment as those to which the people of the world resort. It might have been concluded, that in the peace that passes understanding, the joy unspeakable and full of glory, and the rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, he had found not only a substitute, but an infinite compensation, for the gratifications, which by becoming a Christian he had surrendered, and that he would deem it a disparagement of his religious privileges to suppose

that any thing more than these were necessary for his felicity; or that if an addition were needed, an adequate one could not be found in healthful recreation amidst the scenery of nature, in the pleasures of knowledge, or the activities of benevolence. To hear all this talk, then, about the necessity of entertainment, and the impossibility of relieving the exhaustion of labour, and the monotony of life, without parties, routs, and diversions, sounds very like a growing weariness of the yoke of Christ, or a complaining, as if the church's paradise were no better than a waste howling wilderness, which needed the embellishments of worldly taste, and all the resources of human art, to render it tolerable, or which in fact must become little better than a fool's paradise to please the degenerate Christian. The growing desire after amusement marks a low state of religion, and is likely to depress it still lower. It is the profession of a Christian that he is not so much intent upon being happy in this world, as upon securing happiness in the next; that he is rather preparing for bliss, than possessing and enjoying it now; and that he can, therefore, be very well content to forego many things in which the people of the world see no harm, and the harm of which it might be difficult for him, if called upon for proof, to demonstrate; but which he is willing to abstain from, just because they appear to him to take him off from those pleasures which await him, and for which he is to prepare, in the eternal world.

IV. The spirit of trade as it is now carried on, is no less adverse to a high state of religion, than the desire of amusement; and like that, is all the more dangerous because of the impossibility of assigning limits within which the indulgence of it is lawful, and

beyond which it becomes an infringement of the law of God. Our chief danger lies in those things, which become sins only by the degree to which an affection or pursuit not wrong in itself, is carried; such as covetousness, pleasure-taking, and attention to the business of life: these all originate in things which are lawful in themselves, and sinful only in excess. Fornication, adultery, falsehood, robbery, and other vices, are all so marked out, and so marked off from the region of what is lawful, that the line of division is distinctly perceptible, and we can see at once when we are approaching the point of prohibition, and when we have stepped over it. But we cannot say this of worldly-mindedness. The love of acquisition and appropriation is one of the instinctive principles of our nature, planted in it by the hand of God, and intended to subserve the wisest and most beneficent purposes. The whole fabric of society is founded upon it, and all social organization is regulated by it. Trade may be said to be of God's appointment, if not directly, yet by the law of labour under which we are placed; and we cannot do without it. But then, like every other good, it may be abused, and become an evil. It may exert so engrossing an influence over the mind as to absorb it, and to exclude from it the consideration of every other subject. It must never be forgotten that the rule is binding upon us all, to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness:" to overcome the world by faith: to set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. All this is as truly law now, as it ever was; and no attention to things seen and temporal, no labour even to provide things honest in the sight of all men, much more to provide things abundant and luxurious

for ourselves, can release us from the obligation of a supreme regard to things "unseen and eternal."

Now there never was in the history of the world, an age or a country, in which the spirit of trade was more urgent, than it is in this land, and in our day. We are the greatest trading, manufacturing, and commercial country not only that now is, but that ever was. Tyre, Carthage, Phœnicia, and Venice, were mere pedlars compared with Britain. Ours is "the mart of nations:" the emporium of the world. Such a state of things affects us all. Scarcely any stand so remote from the scene of busy activity as not to feel its impulse, and to catch its spirit. All rush into the contest for wealth: all hope to gain a prize of greater or less value. Education has raised up many from the lower, and wealth has attracted down many from the higher walks, of life, to the level of the trading portion of the community: while population, as is natural in such a state of things, has gone on increasing. What is the result? Just what might have been expected, a keen and eager competition for business, beyond any former precedent. Every trade, every profession, every branch of manufacture, or of commerce, seems over-stocked, and every department of action over-crowded. See what must follow, time is so occupied that men have scarcely an hour in a week for thoughtfulness, reading the Scriptures, and prayer; the head, and heart, and hands, are so full of secular matters, that there is no room for God, Christ, salvation, and eternity; competition is so keen and eager, that to get business, the whatsoever things are true, and just, and honest, and lovely, and of good report, are trampled under foot, and conscientiousness is forgotten or destroyed. If these efforts are successful, and wealth

flows in, and the tradesman rapidly rises in society, then he is, perhaps, destroyed by prosperity. In addition to all this, what an inconceivable amount of mischief has been inflicted by the gambling system of speculation, which though not set up, has been stimulated, by railway schemes. What multitudes have plunged into the gulf of perdition which yawns beneath those who have taken up the resolution of the men that will be rich, and who are determined to encounter the many foolish and hurtful lusts which beset their path. Religion becomes a flat, insipid, and abstract thing, amidst all the excitement produced by such pursuits. Even the Sabbath day hardly serves its purpose as a season of respite and remorse, given to arrest the eagerness of pursuit after wealth, and to loosen, for a while, the chain that binds man to earth; and is passed with an impatience that says, "When will it be over, that we may buy and sell and get again." Of what use are sermons to those whose minds and hearts are intent upon their speculations or their business? And even the voice of prayer, which calls them into the presence of God, calls them not away from their secularities. Their Father's house is made a house of merchandise, and the Holy of Holies a place of traffic. As soon might you expect a company of gamblers to lay down their cards, and with the stakes yet undecided before their eyes listen with attention to a homily or a prayer, as some professing Christians to join with reverence in the devotions of the Sabbath, or to hear with interest the voice of the preacher. The spirit of trade thus carried on is flattening the religion that is left, and is preventing more from being produced.

The great object of life to those professing Christians

who have the opportunity, seems to be to become rich. Their chief end does not appear to be so much to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever, as to obtain and enjoy the world. Wealth is the centre of their wishes, the point to which their desires appear to preserve an invariable tendency. How many who have named the name of Christ, and avouched him to be all their salvation, and all their desire, still make "gold their hope, and say unto fine gold, Thou art my confidence." Jehovah is the God of their creed, but Mammon is the god of their hearts. Part of one day only they profess to worship in the sanctuary of religion, and all the other six days of the week they are devout adorers of the god of wealth. Professing Christians! it is this worldly spirit that blights your hopes, that chills religion to the very heart, that withers your graces, that poisons your comforts, and blasts the fair fame of your Redeemer's kingdom. While this spirit pervades the professing people of God, vital godliness will not only be low, but will remain so. How can it be otherwise than that the church will appear covered with the dust of the earth, and robbed of her heavenly glory, while there are few to weep over the woes of Jerusalem, who struggle for her prosperity, who are affected by her reproach, or who are jealous for her honour. Let us then be duly impressed with the fact that in this country and in this age, trade is contending with religion for the universal dominion over men's minds, hearts, and consciences, and that according to present appearances there is no small danger of the victory being gained by the former. Christians, take the alarm!

V. Among the hindrances to a spirit of earnest piety, must be mentioned the political excitement which has so

extensively prevailed in this country since the passing of the Reform Bill, and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Both these measures were just and right; and what is politically right, cannot in itself be morally wrong; they only conceded rights which could not be refused in equity, and did but redress wrongs which not only degraded the party that endured them, but also disgraced that which inflicted them, and thus wiped out blots which had long disfigured the British constitution, and sullied the page of English history. But at the same time, these great changes brought professing Christians into new perils, exposed their religion to fresh dangers, and rendered it necessary to give a greater vigour to that faith which overcometh the world. It is freely admitted, as has been a thousand times repeated, that in putting on the Christian, we do not put off the citizen: and do not, upon entering the church, retire altogether from the world. Religious liberty has an intimate connection with the interests of religion, for the freedom of the Christian cannot exist without the liberty of the man, and the stability and progress of the Redeemer's kingdom are considerably affected by the course of legislation. Hence it seems neither possible if it were right, nor right if it were possible, for professing Christians altogether to quit the arena of politics. Still, however, it must be confessed that it requires a far larger measure of the life of faith than they appear to have possessed, to resist the paralysing influence which comes from such a quarter over the spirit of piety; and the consequence has been, that she has come out of the scene of strife, covered with its dust, and enfeebled by its struggles.

In such times as those of the great conflict against

tyranny and popery, in the reign of the Stuarts, when every thing dear to liberty and religion was at stake, the politicians and heroes of those days prepared themselves for the senate and the camp, by the devout exercises of the closet, fed the flame of their courage at the fount of their piety, felt that they must be saints in order to be patriots, and expected to have power to conquer man, only as they had power to prevail with God. It might he truly said of them, it was not that their religion was political, but their politics religious. Every thing they did was consecrated by the Word of God and prayer. They were wrong in some things they did, and unwise in some things they said, but even this was at the dictate of conscience, though a misguided one. There were hypocrites among them no doubt, for it was hardly possible that such splendid virtues as many of them possessed should not be admired and imitated by some who had not the grace to be their genuine followers; and an uncouth cast of phraseology and some modes of action no doubt marred their piety; but even these disfigurements could not conceal their manly spirits. Is it so now in our struggles for objects which, though of some consequence, are of less importance than theirs? Have we not all the ardour of political excitement, without feeling the necessity of personal religion? Do we realize the need of a new baptism of the Spirit, to prepare us for political contests, and are we acting as if we were convinced that we must put on afresh the whole armour of God before we go into the battle-field of contending parties? Have we made our politics religious, instead of making our religion political? Have our pastors, when they have engaged in these matters, prepared themselves for it by

communion with God; and have our senators before they have gone to the place of legislation, and our councillors and aldermen, ere they have entered the civic hall, fortified themselves by fasting and prayer, with the spirit of religion? Have we not on the contrary, lost in piety what we have gained in liberty, and felt "the powers of the world to come" weakened in their influence over us, in proportion as we have had a share in wielding the power of the world that now is? As dissenters have we not been too anxious about our political influence? Or at any rate, have we not in seeking to increase this, lost something of a better influence which we should have laboured to preserve? Perhaps it may be thought that this is the day of struggle for great principles, the reform of great abuses, the contest for lost rights, and the settlement of a wise, equitable, and permanent constitution of things; and that though the spirit of saintly and seraphic piety may suffer somewhat during the conflict, yet the time will come by and bye, when having conquered an honourable peace, she will sit down amidst the trophies that have been won, to heal her wounds, and recover her strength. I wish it may be so: but what if by venturing unnecessarily so far into the thick of the affray, she should receive wounds that are incurable, and sink into a state of exhaustion, from which she cannot be easily or speedily recovered! What I say, then, is this, that if we must be political, and to a certain extent we must be, do not let us smile with contempt at the craven fears, or the superstitious apprehensions, or the ignoble whinings, as they will be called, of those who would remind us that a time of political excitement brings on a state of things, which endangers all that is vital in

godliness, damps the flame of devotion in the soul, and tends to depress religion in our churches.

But there are other excitements against which we have need to be on our guard, excitements which come still more within the unquestioned circle of religious activity. It is well for us to remember that true religion, even in its most vigorous and energetic course of action, is of a calm, gentle, and equable temperament. It resembles its Divine Author, of whom it is said, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets;" it loves the quiet retreat of the closet, and flourishes amidst the stillness of meditation: and adds to these the tranquil pleasures of the sanctuary, and the soft and soothing delights of the communion of saints. It cannot live, and grow, and flourish, amidst perpetual agitation; and it is ever placed in a dangerous position, in an atmosphere too troubled, and in an element uncongenial with its nature, when its active duties are pushed so far as to exclude the devotional ones. There are times when it must come out of its retreat, and mingle in the scenes of agitation and excitement. There are occasions when it must join the crowd, and let its voice be heard, not only borne upon the gale of popular sentiment and feeling, but swelling it. Yet this must be but occasional, and not habitual. If we look back upon the great questions which have called out professing Christians into the scene of agitation during the last half, or last quarter, of a century, how many subjects of a public nature shall we find that have called up our consideration, feeling, and activity? What a struggle we maintained, in what crowds we gathered, and to what a pitch of enthusiasm we were wrought up, for

the removal of that foul blot upon our country's history, that heavy curse upon humanity, and that deep disgrace on our christian profession, the slave trade and slavery! In what a troubled element have we lived of late, through contending against the various schemes of popular education, because we viewed them as unfriendly to our liberties as dissenters, and hostile to the manly independence of the people. There are other topics which need not be specified, tending greatly to agitate the church of Christ. The wonder perhaps is, and it is a cause for gratitude, that considering these things, so much personal religion still remains. Yet it becomes us to remember that as this is an atmosphere uncongenial with its nature, there is the need of constant watchfulness, intense solicitude, and earnest prayer, that the churches, while contending for important objects, do not let down the tone of their spirituality.

VI. Even that which is the glory of the church in this age, and the hope of the world, which is one of the brightest signs of the times, and the loss of which would be an occasion to clothe the heavens with sackcloth, and the earth with mourning; I mean the spirit of holy zeal which is now so active; yes, even this, for want of watchfulness, care, and earnest prayer, may become a snare and a mischief to personal godliness. We have need to take care that the reproach be not brought against us, that while we have kept the vineyards of others, our own we have not kept: that, our zeal has been maintained, not by our religion, but at the expense of it: that our ardour is not the natural putting forth of the vital energies of the tree, in branches, leaves, and fruit, but an excrescence upon it, which draws to itself the sap and impoverishes the

genuine produce. Ours is the age of societies, the era of organisation, the day of the platform, the public meeting, the orator, the speech, and the placard. Every thing is trumpeted, blazoned, shall I say puffed; not only our missionary and Bible society meetings, but our ordination services, formerly so quiet and so solemn: even the subjects of our very sermons, the most awful verities of our religion, must now obtrude themselves in glaring placards, and stare out in imposing capitals, side by side with advertisements of plays by celebrated actors, concerts by renowned singers, lectures by itinerant philosophers, and feats of agility by equestrian performers. All is agitation, excitement, and publicity; and religion is one subject for this among many others. Something of all this, no doubt, is proper, and cannot be otherwise managed at present, and ought not to be discontinued; but then, on the other hand, much of it is contrary to the dignity, the peacefulness, and the sanctity of true religion. There is in some of our religious concerns too near an approach by far to mountebankship, to the newspaper puffing of noisy and obtrusive tradesmen, to the catch-penny trickery of quacks and impostors. Let us consider how the truly religious spirit, the lofty, heavenly, devout aspirations of the renewed mind must suffer for all this: how true godliness must be corrupted and changed into a novelty-seeking, wonder-loving thing: how the flame of devotion must expire, or be changed into the fantastic fires round which little children dance in sport.

And where matters are not in this fashion, and there is nothing but the mere reiteration of public meetings, yet may they not by their frequency draw off the attention from personal religion, and in many

cases become a substitute for it? There are public meetings, and resolutions, and speeches, and anecdotes, for every thing, and we must have them, and even be thankful for them, as long as the present mode of carrying on our schemes of evangelization are pursued. But then let us take care, anxious, prayerful, vigilant care, that these things do not exert an unfavourable influence upon us, by producing a taste for excitement which shall make the ordinary means of grace, and Lord's-day opportunities, tame, flat, and insipid; by throwing an air of frivolity over our whole religion; by drawing us out of our closets, and making us in religion resemble our Gallic neighbours, who are said to know little of home enjoyment, and who live almost entirely abroad; by making us ostentatious and vain-glorious, instead of humble and retiring; by impairing the modesty of our youth, who are so early brought into action and notice; by corrupting the purity of our motives through the publicity given to names and donations; by engrossing that time which should be spent in private prayer, reading the Scriptures, and meditation; in short, by converting our whole religion into a bustling activity about religion.

VII. The danger here set forth is not a little increased, in our day, by the modern invention and extensive prevalence of certain social convocations, such for instance as tea meetings. Of this species of fraternal intercourse our fathers were ignorant, and so were we ourselves till within the last few years; but now they are the prevailing fashion of the day, and are become so common, and in such frequent demand, as to have led in many congregations to the fitting-up an apparatus for their celebration. The incorporation of

these social festivities with religious matters, though it prevails more among the Methodists and Dissenters, is not exclusively confined to these bodies, as some of the clergy of the Church of England have adopted the practice.

There are few things among modern customs which more need the vigilance, caution, and supervision of Christian pastors and the churches, than these religio-convivial entertainments. There can be no harm in the abstract idea of Christians eating and drinking together, especially when the elements of the feast are nothing more expensive, inebriating, or epicurean, than tea, and bread and butter, or cakes. There can be little doubt that the primitive Christians had their social meals, and that to these agapæ, or love feasts, as they were called, Jude refers, where he speaks of some who were "spots upon your feasts of charity." Out of this custom of having meals together, which were made appendages of the Lord's Supper, grew the corruptions mentioned in the first epistle to the Corinthians. The practice of eating and drinking together for purposes of unity and charity, still continued in the early churches, till it was so abused to carnal purposes as to call for ecclesiastical interference, and by the council of Laodicea, in the fourth century, it was forbidden to eat and drink, or spread tables in the house of God.

There is little fear, it may be presumed, of the modern practice of tea meetings ever being abused in such a manner as this: yet it becomes us to recollect that all corruptions were at one time only as a grain of mustard seed, which sown in a congenial soil, advanced after the first insidious germination with rapid growth to unsuspected strength and stature. It is, not, how-

ever, to what these entertainments may become, should the tea meeting be exchanged for a supper, that I now allude, but to what they are already. I have been present at some, in which not only my taste as a man, but my sensibilities as a Christian, have been somewhat offended. I have seen the house of God turned into what had all the air of a place of public amusement: I have beheld grave ministers, and deacons, and members of Christian churches, mingled up with professors and non-professors of religion, young men and women, boys and girls, in all the noisy buzz, and perhaps sometimes approaching to obstreperous mirth, of one of these meetings: I have witnessed young women of the working classes, dressed up as ladies for the occasion, flirting about with their beaux of the other sex: in short all was glee, and merriment, and hilarity, and this perhaps in connexion with some religious object; the anniversary of opening a chapel for God's worship, or the celebration of a minister's settlement with his flock. Probably it will be said by some, this is a caricature. I am conscious it does not exceed the truth, and I might appeal to many of my brethren who have witnessed and lamented the same things.

To come to what is no less fashionable, but perhaps somewhat less injurious to the spirit of religion, than these things, I mean the soirées of the present day; these also require some caution in their management, when held in connexion with religion, lest they degenerate into a species of worldly amusement, the tendency of which will be to depress the tone of piety, and to destroy the seriousness of mind with which it ought ever to be regarded. Now I know that it is difficult to prove logically that these things are wrong, and I do

not mean to assert that they are; by no means; but as they are the increasing custom of the day, and are liable to be abused, either by being too frequent, or by being held in a spirit of worldliness, I think the church of Christ, and for them I write, should be put upon their guard, and called to a spirit of holy vigilance. I know that sociality, cheerfulness, and even tastefulness, are sanctioned by religion, than which nothing is more social, cheerful, and tasteful; and heaven is full of all these attributes. But then, religion is at the same time no less characterised by solemnity, sanctity, and deep seriousness, than it is by joy. It is that which connects the soul with God, with salvation, with heaven, and with eternity; it is the conflict of a soul fighting the great fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life; the agony of a heaven-born spirit, reaching after celestial bliss; the training of an immortal mind for the beatific vision of God and the Lamb; and, therefore, all our pursuits and our pleasures too, should be in strict and constant harmony with it. When we affirm, as we most truly may, that "religion never was design'd to make our pleasures less," we should at the same time recollect that it puts aside many of the pleasures of the world as beneath our notice, if not injurious to our character, for others so incomparably superior, as to dispose us, by a natural process, to reject the drop for the sake of the fountain, and to lay aside the taper when we see the sun. We have only to consider what religion is, what it calls us to, requires of us, leads us to, and is intended to prepare us for, to see at once, and to feel as by a holy instinct, what kind of pleasures it should lead us to seek, and what to refuse. It will probably be asked, whether I would suppress all these

modern usages of tea meetings, soirées, and social entertainments. I reply, certainly not. They may unite much instruction, and much spiritual improvement, with as much innocent social enjoyment. But then I would watch them, with an entire conviction that they may by possibility come to what is harmful. I would limit their growth, that they may not become too frequent and too trivial; and I would, where religion is in any form their object, take care that they be conducted in a religious spirit. I would let religion with all her cheerfulness, but yet with all her seriousness and sanctity, preside over the scene, and diffuse her blessed influence through every soul. If, as is usually the case, there are non-professors and unconverted persons present, I would let them see how happy Christians are, not indeed by transferring the pleasures of the world into the social circle of the redeemed, but by drawing down the pleasures of heaven into the church on earth. The way to win the ungodly to religion, is not by showing them that their pleasures are ours, but that ours are infinitely superior to any which they know. A Christian ought to be, and would be, if he understood his privileges, the very type of bliss in himself, and an index pointing out the way of happiness to others.

It would be well for the minister to be always present at every tea meeting held amongst any section of his flock, and to endeavour to repress all undue levity as soon as it appeared, and to maintain a tone of rational, religious, and agreeable intercourse. The meetings of Sunday school teachers especially require his presence and his influence, not only to make them feel that he is in fact their supreme superintendent, and

the teacher of teachers, but to prevent that excessive hilarity which would perhaps in some cases be likely to spring up. And the pastor might also, with great propriety and utility, hold occasionally such meetings with the members of the church, and thus promote the unity and love of his flock among themselves, and their attachment to him. I adopt this plan myself. The church under my care is large, amounting to upwards of nine hundred members, and scattered over the whole expanse of this great town; and the public business and correspondence devolving upon me, in common with my brethren, are so oppressive, that I cannot pretend to fill up the measure of pastoral duty; and therefore to remedy, as far as possible, this defect, I invite the members by sections to take tea with me in the vestry, when I converse a little with each individual separately, and then hold devotional exercises with them all collectively. At such meetings nothing of course but what is serious and devout occurs; all is solemn, joyful, and to edification; all sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

The object, then, of all these remarks will be seen; that their design is to resist the tendency which some of our modern customs have, to diminish the seriousness, repress the earnestness, and altogether change the nature of true religion; to impair the dignity, to lower the spirituality, and impede the usefulness of its professors; and thus, instead of making the people of the world religious, to make the members of the church worldly.

VIII. But, perhaps, there are few things which tend more effectually to repress the spirit of earnest piety, and to keep it down at a low point, than those fallacies about its nature, and that perversion of acknowledged

principles and facts in connexion with it, in which so many professors indulge. I will mention some of these.

Is it not clear that many persons satisfy themselves with admitting the necessity of earnestness, without ever once endeavouring to obtain it, and thus put their conviction and admission of the necessity of the thing, in the place of seeking after the thing itself? We talk to a cold or lukewarm individual, and represent to him the inconsistency of such a heartless religion as his, and the indispensable necessity of more devotedness. It is all, and at once, admitted; and he stops the conversation, gets rid of the subject, and evades impression and conviction, by this ready assent. And thus by such a facile, assenting, unresisting admission, the power of the awful truth that he is in a dangerous state, seems to be destroyed. It were better, far better, that these lukewarm professors should deny the necessity of more intensity of thinking, feeling, and acting, that they may be reasoned and expostulated with, and made to think by force of argument, and to feel by the power of representation. But in this easy admission, without opposition, question, or doubt, the strongest representation only goes in to be cushioned, and fall asleep.

And then the applicability of the subject to so many, if not to all, is another cause of the evasion of the subject. "It concerns me," is the inward thought, "not more than all these myriads of professors." Its absolute importance as applicable to any one, seems dissipated in the idea of how many it is applicable to. As if the authority and importance of the one great admonition to earnestness were divided into innumerable diminutive shares, with but inconsiderable force in each.

How kindly and humbly each is willing not to account his soul more important than that of any of his fellow-mortals! Yet not so benevolent either, in another view of the matter; for in a certain indistinct way, he is laying the blame on the rest of mankind, if he is indifferent about his own highest interest.

"They are under the same great obligation; in their manner of practically acknowledging it, they are my pattern; they keep me down to their level. If their shares of the great concern were more worthily attended to, perhaps mine would be also. One has fancied sometimes what might have been the effect, in the selected instances, if the case had been that the Sovereign Creator had appointed but a few men, here and there one, to an immortal existence, or at least declared it only with respect to them. One cannot help imagining them to feel every hour the impression of their sublime and awful predicament! But why, why is it less felt a sublime and awful one because the rest of our race are in it too? Does not each as a perfectly distinct one stand in the whole magnitude of the concern, and in the responsibility and the danger, as absolutely as if there were no other one? How is it less to him than if he stood alone? Their losing the happy interest of eternity, will not be that he shall not have lost it for himself. If he shall have lost it, he will feel that they have not lost it for him. He should, therefore, now feel that upon him is concentrated, even individually upon him, the entire importance of this chief concern."

Foster, in his lecture on "Earnestness in Religion," from which this extract is taken, enumerates other fallacies by which men impose upon themselves in excuse for lukewarmness in religion, such as taking a perverse advantage of the obscurity of the objects of our faith, and of the incompetence of our faculties to apprehend them; the recognition of the obligations of religion upon our life, as a whole, without making them bear upon all the particular parts of it as they pass; and a soothing self-assurance, founded, the man can hardly say on what, that some how or other, and at

some time or other, he shall be better: a kind of superstitious hope, excited by some particular circumstance, that he shall yet be improved, although at the time he makes no effort, and forms no intention, to amend.

There is no cause more fatal in depressing true piety among its professors, than the notion that religion is to be regarded rather as a fixed state, than a progress; a point to be reached, rather than a course to be continually pursued. It is both; but it is only one of these notions that is taken up by many persons. Justification does introduce us to a state of favour with God; regeneration, into a state of holy life; and membership, into a state of communion with the church, but in addition to this, there is the progress of sanctification, the going on unto perfection. It is extremely probable to me that many of the ministers of the Evangelical school, have almost unconsciously, or inconsiderately, given countenance to this mistaken, because partial view, by dwelling too exclusively on the mere transition from a state of death to a state of life. They have shewn that in the act of receiving the gospel, a man is at once changed both in his moral relation and moral condition. From that time he becomes another man, his state is altered, he passes from death unto life. But then this state is to manifest itself by a progressive development of the new principle. He is not only to be born, but he is to grow. It is fallacious to infer the growth, when we cannot infallibly determine the birth: it is much safer to infer the birth from the growth. The New Testament everywhere represents the Christian life by things denoting growth and progress: "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." There is first the babe,

then the young man, then the father in Christ. There is first the springing of the corn, then the blade, then the full ear. We are to abound more and more in knowledge, faith, and all holiness. The Scriptures never fail to keep before us the idea of advancement.

But this is almost entirely overlooked by many professing Christians; their idea is to get into a state of justification and regeneration, and having attained that, they are content. They repose in it. They have as they imagine escaped the tempest, and reached the shore in safety, and there they stand, exulting at best in their deliverance, without attempting to penetrate and possess the country they have reached. Their feeling is, "I am converted, and am in the church:" and there they stop. From the time they are received into fellowship, their solicitude begins to abate: from that point they sink down into the repose of those who are at ease in Zion, they have received their certificate of personal religion and are satisfied. They have no great anxiety to grow in grace, to be ever advancing in the divine life, and to be ever making fresh attainments in holiness. If you see them ten or twenty years after their profession was first made, you find them where you left them, or even gone back from their first love; their religion has had some kind of motion, but it has been stationary, not locomotive; it has gone upon hinges, not upon wheels, or if upon the latter, they have moved in a circle, not on a line. Yet what invaluable means of culture they have had; what auspicious Sabbaths they have spent, what sermons they have heard, what books they have read! Still their tempers are as unsubdued, their corruptions as unmortified, and their graces as stunted, as they were at first. No pupils

make so little proficiency as those who are educated in the school of Christ: in no case is so much instruction, so much discipline, bestowed in vain; no where is improvement so little perceptible as here. How is this? Just because these persons are labouring under the fatal mistake of their having reached a standing point, not a starting point, of their having come into a state, and gained an advantage, which render solicitude and progress unnecessary. They do not actually admit this in words, nor even in thought, but unconsciously to themselves, this is the secret working of their minds.

Akin to this, is the sad abuse which is made of the humiliating fact that there is no perfection upon earth; as if this should reconcile us to all kinds and to all degrees of imperfection. It is astonishing, and somewhat painful, to observe with what indifference, and almost satisfaction, this reflection upon our fallen humanity is made by some persons, as if they were glad to find in the admission a cover and an excuse for all their faults. Under the pretext that there is no perfection, they do things at which a tender-hearted Christian, a professor with a delicate sensibility of conscience, would be shocked. They forget that the command of God is to "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord:" "to go on unto perfection:" to "be perfect:" and that he who does not desire to be perfect, does not seek to be so, and does not lament his imperfections, and labour to remove as many of them as possible, discovers a heart not yet brought into subjection to the authority of Christ. The true earnestness of piety is an intense desire and labour after a perfect conformity to the revealed will of God. The individual who has this mind in him, can tolerate no imperfections, but sin-

cerely wishes to discover all his faults; he searches his heart, and implores God to search it, in order that he may find them out, and put them away. He knows that the bliss of heaven arises in great part from the perfection of holiness, and he wishes to approach as near to heaven upon earth as he can, by coming as near as possible to perfect holiness.

What a different aspect would the church of God present to the world, and in what power and glory would its professors of religion appear, if it consisted of a multitude of men and women all striving and struggling after a perfect conformity to that law which makes it our duty to love God with all our heart, and our neighbours as ourselves, all anxious to come as near to a resemblance of God, and to have as much of the mind of Christ, as could be attained by any one out of heaven, all seeking after their own short comings and offences, and glad of any help to discover them, in order that they may be put away, all stimulating and helping each other on in the career of moral improvement, all watching and praying for the aid of the Divine Spirit to help their infirmities; what a scene, I say, would then be exhibited to an astonished world! The angels of God would delight to gaze on it! What less than this is the law of Christ's church? In what less interesting and important aspect than this, ought the church of Christ to be seen?

It is not improbable that a dread of singularity, a fear of breaking through the barriers of conventionality, a dislike of being thought to be setting up as a reformer, have kept many back from seeking a higher degree of piety than has been exhibited around them. They have been conscious of the prevalent faults of the day,

which were their own also, and under the stern rebuke of an enlightened conscience, they determined to advance to more marked separation from the world, and a higher tone of spiritual feeling. From this resolution, however, they were immediately and effectually deterred, by an apprehension of the remarks, perhaps the sneers, which they should bring upon themselves from the lukewarm and the worldly, who would taunt them for setting up as reformers of their brethren, and as affecting superior sanctity. This apprehension is strengthened in many persons by too low an estimate of their own influence. "What can I do?" they say; "I, who am so obscure and uninfluential, to stay the torrent of worldly-mindedness which is flowing through the church? My example can do nothing for the good of others, and can only bring opposition, reproach, and reproof upon myself. I see the miserably low condition of professors around me, and I feel and lament my own: happy should I be to see a healthier state of religion in our church, and gladly would I follow in the wake of those who would attempt to improve it, but I cannot attempt this myself. I should only be laughed at as a person affecting what I did not possess, inflated by vanity, or cherishing the pride of singularity." Let such persons remember that they are not to take into account what may be thought of their conduct by others, what influence it may have upon them, or what opposition it may provoke: convinced of their shortcomings, they are intensely and laboriously to seek to have them made up. Whether others will applaud or censure; follow or resist; approve or condemn; they are to go on. No dread of ridicule or reproach should deter them from growing in grace. They must dare to

be singular: venture to go alone: determine, whether men will bear or forbear, to go forward. The church can never be improved if this spirit of timidity prevails. There could have been neither martyr nor reformer upon these craven principles. I tell the man who will be in advance of his generation, he will be the object of their envy, their suspicion, and their ill will: and there will be no exemption from such treatment for the professing Christian who aims at a higher standard of piety than he sees in the church of which he is a member.

The people of the world will be less envious, jealous and spiteful towards a neighbour who excels them in honesty and integrity, than inconsistent and worldly-minded professors will be towards a fellow-member who has more piety than they have: because their conscience having a little more light reflected from the example and expostulation of their more consistent neighbour, is thus rendered more sensitive, and is more easily wounded. Such persons are more censorious of superior holiness, and more tolerant of great imperfections, than any others; and he who would rebuke their sins by avoiding them, whatever his love for them, is sure to be the object of their dislike. But we must not thus be stopped in our endeavours after higher attainments in piety. We must follow out our convictions, and endeavour to live up to the standard set before us in God's Word, and not suffer ourselves to be deterred from our duty by the opinion of our fellow-creatures or fellow-professors. Our condemnation will be the greater, if after our attention has been drawn to the subject, and our conscience awakened, we allow ourselves to be turned aside by the fear of the frowns or the sneers of others. God

will help us if we are willing to be helped, and raise us all above that fear of man which brings a snare. No one who is really in earnest to grow in grace, and to attain to more eminent piety, will be left to struggle on, unassisted in his endeavours. Divine grace will be made sufficient for him, and he will be successful in his efforts.

At the same time he must remember that his humility, meekness, and gentleness must be no less apparent than his other excellences. It must be earnestness itself, and not the appearance of it merely, that he seeks and manifests; and it must be for its own sake, and not for the sake of gaining a character for it. There must be nothing even remotely approaching to the contemptuous disposition which says, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." No affected airs of superior piety, no offensive obtrusion of our example, no supercilious rebukes, no bitter censoriousness, no angry reproaches, but a piety, which like the sun, shall be seen rather than heard, and shall diffuse its influence in a noiseless manner, and almost without drawing attention to its source. Such a profession must do good, however humble the station in life of him who makes it; and if all who are convinced by these pages of their own deficiencies, as well as of those of the church at large, will attempt to make up the latter by beginning with the former, this volume will not have been written in vain.

IX. This enumeration of the causes that tend to depress and injure the spirit of vital godliness would be incomplete if I did not mention the modern taste for frequenting watering places and travelling abroad. Having dwelt on this at length in "The Christian

Professor," under the chapter, "The Professor away from home," I shall only briefly advert to the subject here. There are few things which have had a more unhappy influence upon the middling and upper classes of professing Christians than this. Even the annual visits to the coast, or the inland places of fashionable resort, now so prevalent, are sufficiently pernicious in their influence, to put all who have any regard to their eternal welfare most seriously upon their guard against the temptations which are thus presented, by the sudden and complete transition from employment to idleness, by the removal of those salutary restraints with which they are surrounded in the habitations where they statedly reside, and the mixed characters of the society into which they are almost necessarily thrown; by the amusements which are there most prevalent and fashionable; by the general air of dissipation which is thrown over the whole scene; by the interruption of their usual habits of devotion, private, domestic, and social; and by the indisposedness for the seasons and exercises of religion, which is the consequence of all these circumstances. These are no imaginary dangers, as the experience of all who have adopted this practice must attest, and as the total apostacy of some, and the backsliding of many, will corroborate.

This danger is of course increased by foreign travel in numerous ways; by a removal from the usual means of grace; by the frequent desecration of the Sabbath; by associations oftentimes with worldly-minded companions; by straining and tampering with conscience, in reference to many matters of very questionable propriety; and by the familiar gaze of mere curiosity upon scenes and customs known to be sinful. In all these ways may

the spirituality of our minds, the tenderness of our conscience, and the delicacy of our moral sensibilities be impaired by those continental tours which are so fashionable and so fascinating. Their influence, no doubt, has been mischievous to an extent of which we are not aware, among many whose religion was already of a feeble and a doubtful kind. Nor have more vigorous spiritual constitutions escaped the influence of the malaria of those infected regions. But as the thing is lawful in itself, and only sinful when abused, let us, if disposed thus to recreate our minds, and gratify our curiosity, which we innocently may, recollect that we are about to expose ourselves to peril, earnestly pray for grace to preserve us, and watch as well as pray that we enter not into temptation. As our best preservative from home, and at home, as one of the most effectual means of resisting temptation and promoting holiness,

"let us consider ouselves under the all-seeing eye of the Divine Majesty, as in the midst of an infinite globe of light, which compasseth us about both behind and before, and pierceth to the innermost recesses of the soul. The sense and the remembrance of the Divine presence is the most ready and effectual means, both to discovering what is unlawful, and to restrain us from it. There are some things which a person could make a shift to palliate or defend, and yet he dares not look Almighty God in the face, and adventure upon them. If we look unto him we shall be lightened; if we 'set him always before us, he will guide us with his eye, and instruct us in the way wherein we should walk.'" *

X. The last thing I shall mention as tending to depress the spirit of true religion, is the spirit of sec-

* Scougal's "Life of God in the Soul of Man." Would God the whole generation of the professors of true religion of this day, and of every age, would read this most beautiful and incomparable treatise on practical religion. This is the religion we want, and of which we have too little.

tarianism, which so extensively prevails among the various sections of the Christian church.

By the spirit of sectarianism I mean that overweening attachment to our distinctive opinions on doctrine, government, and the sacraments, which leads to a disproportionate and often a distempered zeal for upholding and promulgating them; and to a state of alienation, if not of hostility, towards those who differ from us on those points, notwithstanding their agreement with us on still more fundamental and important matters. This spirit of exclusiveness which shuts out from our affection, sympathy, and communion, all those who are not within the pale of our church, however evangelical in sentiment and holy in conduct, and which would seem to restrict all excellence to our own body, is, whatever its abettors may imagine, not only anti-social, but positively anti-christian. It is the essence of bigotry; the germ of intolerance; and in its last developement, the spirit of persecution.

That such a spirit of sectarianism as this does prevail, is the confession and the lamentation of all catholic-minded Christians. It might seem as if this spirit were itself an indication and an operation of earnestness. So it is of the earnestness of party, but not of piety. Saul of Tarsus had no lack of this when he was hasting to Damascus, and breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of Jesus; nor the popish inquisitors in exterminating heretics by fire and sword; but who will call it in their cases the earnestness of true religion? It is zeal, but kindled by a spark from the flaming pit below. Zeal is antagonistic to true piety, when it is felt for lesser matters, to the neglect of greater ones, and when it produces more indifference or even

dislike, to those who differ from us in minor points, than friendship, sympathy, and love to them, on the ground of the more important ones on which we are united. This is easily demonstrated. It is an injury and opposition to that truth which is the basis of all religion, inasmuch as it depresses its more momentous doctrines, and gives an undue elevation to its lesser ones. It is at open war with that love which is the greatest of the christian graces, the very essence of religion, and without which all else is but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. It introduces a foreign and corrupting element into true godliness, and envenoms it with the poison of malice and wrath. It diverts attention from primary to secondary matters, and exhausts the energies of the soul in bringing forth the fruits of contention, instead of the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It cuts off the channels of sympathy between the different sections of the universal church, and thus deprives each part of the benefit of what may be found in the way of example, spiritual literature, and co-operation, in the other sections of the great fellowship of believers. It tends to perpetuate our strifes and divisions, by extinguishing the spirit by which alone we are likely to come to ultimate agreement. It fosters in many a disposition to infidelity, by disparaging the excellence and weakening the power of true religion. It represses the true spirit of prayer, and thus is a barrier to the spread of the gospel in the world, and it grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby he is induced to withhold his gracious influence.

Such are the consequences of sectarianism, and can any one doubt whether it is inimical to religion? It may substitute for the fervour of a pure zeal a fiery

turbulence; but it is not genuine piety; it is not the true vital warmth of a soul in full health, but the fever of a diseased and morbidly restless spirit. It is high time to stop the progress and destroy the power of this hateful temper. If we have not religion enough to vanquish sectarianism, sectarianism will acquire more and more power to vanquish religion. Let charity rise into the ascendant. We cannot do a better thing either for the church or for the world, than seek for a greater degree of love among the friends of Christ. How has religion been tarnished in her beauty, weakened in her influence, and limited in her reign, by these contentions among her friends! Success therefore be to those efforts which are now being made by the sons of peace to bring the scattered and alienated followers of the Lamb into a closer union with each other; and whether the Evangelical Alliance shall or shall not continue to exist in its present form and constitution, all good men must join in the longings and the prayers of our Divine Lord, when he thus breathed out his heart for his disciples, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee; that they all may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

CHAPTER VIII.

INDUCEMENTS TO EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

INDUCEMENTS! Can it be necessary to offer any? What! is not the bare mention of religion enough to rouse every soul who understands the meaning of that momentous word, to the greatest intensity of action? Who needs to have exerted upon his mind the demonstrations of logic, or the persuasions of rhetoric, to move him to seek after wealth, rank, or honour? Who, when an opportunity presents itself to obtain such advantages, requires any thing more than an appeal to his consciousness of their value to engage him in the pursuit?. The very mention of riches suggests at once to man's cupidity a thousand arguments to use the means of obtaining them. What intense longings does it raise in the heart; with what pictures does it crowd the imagination; what a spell does it throw over the whole soul! And why is less, yea, why is not intensely more, than all this felt at the mention of the word religion; that term which comprehends within its sublime and boundless meaning, heaven and earth, time and eternity, God and man? If we were as we ought to be, it would be enough only to whisper in our ears that word which should be of more than magic power to engage all our faculties, and all our energies, in the most resolute pur-

pose, the most determined pursuit, and the most entire self-devotement. Inducements to earnestness in religion! Alas, how low we have sunk, how far have we been paralysed, to need to be thus stimulated! But since this is our state, I am at no loss for considerations which, with every reflecting mind, will be found to supply motives of irresistible potency.

I. How without such a state of mind can we be satisfied that we have any personal religion at all? Where is our evidence that we are sincere Christians, if we are not earnest Christians? Understand, consider, ponder what it is we are seeking after and contending for. Let us recollect what it is we are professedly endeavouring to escape from. It is nothing less than eternal perdition; and not in earnest to flee from the wrath to come! Did any one, besides Lot's wife, whose doom is held up to us as a warning, flee from a burning house with lukewarmness and half a heart? Let us consider what we are professedly making objects of our desire and pursuit; even glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, and not earnestly seeking these? Did ever mortal yet, whose ambition led him to combat for a crown, engage with languor and supineness for the glittering prize? Is "the salvation which is in Jesus Christ, with eternal glory," an object so inconsiderable and of such little value, that a person can really be supposed to be pursuing it, when he is a stranger to any ardour of soul in reference to it? Is religion a contradiction to the usual maxim, that a man's activity in endeavouring to obtain an object is in exact proportion to the value and importance which he attaches to it? Are heaven, and salvation, and eternity, the only matters that shall reverse the maxim,

and make lukewarmness the rule of action? It cannot be; it is impossible: if the supine and careless professor be sincere, all the principles, not only of revelation, but of our own nature, must be subverted.

Without earnestness you are not safe for eternity, and ought to conclude that you are not. Doubt and suspicion ought to rise at once in your mind, and you ought to fear you have never yet started for the incorruptible crown of life and glory. You are in the church only nominally. Your profession, it is to be feared, is hollow and false, and will be found utterly unavailing at last. You will add to the already countless multitude that have gone down to the pit with a lie in their right hand, and who prove that though men may be lost without earnestness, they cannot be saved without it. Would that I could alarm the careless, and awaken the slumbering professor. By what thunder shall I break in upon your deep and dangerous sleep? Oh, that it were possible to reverberate in your ears the echoes of the wailings of those who are mourning in the bottomless pit the sin and folly of an insincere profession of religion!

And then even where there is sincerity, and therefore some degree of this intensity of mind, still it is your duty and privilege to go on increasing it. The more devoted you are, the clearer is your evidence of personal interest in the blessings of salvation. Your doubts and fears will be dissipated by such a state of mind, like the mists and clouds of the morning flying off before the rising sun. You will have the full consciousness that you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, by your joy and peace in believing, by your love to God, by your longings after holiness, by your

spirituality, heavenly-mindedness, and habitual communion with God. Your religion will be self-evident to yourself and to others. You will feel that your citizenship is in heaven, and that you belong more to another world than to this. You will need no voice from heaven, no messenger from God, no searching for your name in the book of God's decrees, to convince you that you have passed from death unto life. The actings of the new, hidden and spiritual life, will be too strong and steady to leave you in any doubt that the principle of vitality is within. You will have the witness in yourself, and its testimony will be too loud and unequivocal to be unheard or mistaken.

Do, do consider, then, ye professors of religion, what it is about which this assurance is to be obtained; it is the salvation of your immortal soul. Revolve often and deeply the infinite realities about which religion is conversant. Most subjects may with greater or less difficulty be made to assume the greater or less degree of importance which the preacher assigns to them. Pompous expressions, bold figures, lively ornaments of eloquence, may often supply a want of dignity in the subject discussed; but every attempt to give importance to a motive taken from eternity, is more likely to enfeeble the doctrine than to invigorate it. Motives of this kind are self-sufficient. Descriptions the most simple, and the most natural, are always the most pathetic or the most terrifying; nor can we find an expression more powerful and more emphatic than that of Paul, "The things which are not seen are eternal." What more could the tongues of men, and the eloquence of angels say? "Eternal things:" oh what subjects are veiled under that expression! Nothing less than eternal

salvation, eternal perdition! Professing Christians, surmount your customary indolence; summon your faculties, and rouse your energies, to the consideration of this subject, and weigh the import of the phrase, "eternal things." The history of nations, the eras of time, the creation of worlds, all fade into insignificance, dwindle to a point, attenuate to a shadow, compared with eternal things. Do you believe them? If not, abjure your creed, abandon your Bible, and renounce your profession. Be consistent, and let the stupendous vision, which like Jacob's ladder rests its foot on earth and places its top in heaven, vanish in thin air. But if you do believe, then say what ought to be the conduct of him, who, in his own conviction, stands with hell beneath him, heaven above him, and eternity before him. Oh, could you spend but one hour in heaven and hell, into one of which you may pass the next hour, and will pass some hour; could you be only for so short a time the witness of ineffable glory and inconceivable misery; could you see "the solemn troops, the sweet societies," of the celestial city, and the legions of accursed spirits which throng the dark domain of the infernal world; and then come back again to earth, would it be possible any more to attend to things seen and temporal, when such things eternal were before you? Politics would lose their fascination, business its importance, wealth its charms, fame its glory, pleasure its attractions, science its value, and even home its power to please. A due impression of heaven and hell, of the soul and eternity, would annihilate for ever all the vain things which now please you most. To every temptation that would divert your mind from the salvation of your soul, you would say, "I cannot buy your bliss so dear, nor part with

heaven for you." It seems necessary that these awful and eternal realities should be thrown back into the distance, and be visible only to the eye of faith, in order to enable us to go on with the affairs of the present world.

By all the worth of the immortal soul, then, by all the blessings of eternal salvation, by all the glories of the upper world, by all the horrors of the bottomless pit, by all the ages of eternity, and by all the personal interest you have in these infinite realities, I conjure you to be in earnest in personal religion.

II. As another inducement to this, may be mentioned the certain connection between a high state of religion in this world, and an exalted state of honour and happiness in the world to come; or, in other words, the different degrees of glory in the celestial kingdom. We are too much accustomed to conceive of heaven and hell as places where the happy inhabitants of the one, and the miserable criminals of the other, will be, respectively, all upon a level: the one, all equally happy, and the other, all equally wretched. This is neither the doctrine of Scripture, nor the deduction of reason. If we consult the Word of God, we find it declared in reference to the wicked, that "The servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." So again it is said by the apostle, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "He which soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he

which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." Now the solemn truth conveyed in this language is this, that man's life is the seed time for eternity, and that as here he is always sowing, so he will hereafter be always reaping: and that the harvest, both as to the kind and the quantity, will be according to the seed. They that sow good seed will have, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold, according to the quantity sown: while they who sow the seed of bad things, will also have a harvest regulated by their seed, both in its quality and amount. God's rule of reward and punishment is a law of proportion. True it is, that in the case of the righteous and the wicked, there is on the part of God a different ground of procedure in reference to each, inasmuch as the punishment of the wicked is on the ground of their own desert, while the reward of the righteous is on that of Christ's merits; but this affects not the rule of distribution, since he who gives to a believer any measure of heavenly glory for the sake of Christ, may on the same ground give to another a far greater measure: he might do this in a way of pure sovereignty, but he has determined to do so according to the measure of holiness to which believers attain on earth.

This principle of different degrees of glory does not at all interfere with, nor in the least oppose, the doctrine of justification by faith: nor does it affect the perfect happiness of the blessed in heaven. It will excite neither envy, jealousy, nor ill-will of any kind, since these passions will be all rooted out from the spirits of just men made perfect; and no other disposition than that of perfect love to God and our fellows will have any place in us. A being possessed of this perfect love,

though the least and lowest in the scale of blessedness, will look up to all above him without the smallest taint of malevolent feeling. All will be perfectly contented, and, therefore, perfectly happy: and he who is perfectly contented, knows nothing of envy: these states of mind are incompatible with each other. There may be vessels of an indefinite number of capacities, yet all may be full. Thus we can conceive of different degrees of glory, and yet no disturbance of the felicity of those who are the subjects of them.

Now the scale by which these varieties will be regulated will be, as I have already supposed, the attainments in personal religion, and the degrees of usefulness of Christians upon earth: and this will help us better to conceive of the whole subject. We may imagine that every effort of vital godliness, every successful resistance of temptation, every reach after holiness, every mortification of sin, every aspiration after conformity to God, may have some effect upon the moral constitution of our nature, analogous to the exercise of our understanding or of our body in strengthening our intellectual and corporeal frame. There may be an expansion, so to speak, of the spiritual nature, an increasing receptivity of glory and honour, ever going on, by our growth in grace on earth: the child of God may here by his good habits in the school of Christ, and by his holy exercises, be preparing for a larger stature of the perfect man in heaven. There can be little doubt that the society of Paradise will be well compacted and orderly. There may be varieties of rank, station, and employment; for aught we can tell, there may be rule, subjection, and government: and therefore the different degrees of grace may be the discipline, the education,

the meetness, for the different situations to be filled up, the posts to be occupied, in the celestial kingdom. There are not wanting intimations of this in the word of God.

Besides, let it be remembered that we shall carry our memory with us to heaven, and will it be no bliss to remember what we did for God on earth, and how we attempted to serve Christ? Why the apostle Paul felt this even on earth; and if the retrospect then afforded him such delight, how much more when he saw the results of all he did, spread out before him in the celestial world. With what rapture would he there say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." How precious would be the recollection of all his sufferings, and all his labours! How it would delight him to look back, and recall to recollection his sacrifices and his services, not in a spirit of pharisaic pride, but of deep humility and adoring gratitude and love. There he would realise the truth of his own words, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." Every soul he had been the instrument of saving would be a separate jewel to enrich and adorn his diadem of glory.

Just thus will it be with all others. Memory will add to their felicities also. The whole multitude of the redeemed will remember all they did for Christ, and think of it with delight; and they who shall have most to think of, will have most bliss in the remembrance of it. The souls which they have been the instruments of saving will all be present to swell their rapture, and augment their bliss. Nor will the enjoyment stop here. The blissful reminiscence will be enhanced by a divine

eulogy, for Christ will add his testimony of approbation to all they did. Even a cup of cold water, if given to a disciple in his name, will not lose its reward. He will pass over nothing. He keeps a book of remembrance of those who even think upon his name: and he will mark with his special and personal commendation all we have done for him: and they who have served him best, will, of course, receive most of his gracious notice and commendation.

Professors, I appeal to you, then, on this deeply interesting and important view of our subject. True it is, that to be just within the threshold of your Father's house, to occupy the lowest room, and to perform the humblest service, will be amazing and unutterable grace, but this ought not to be an excuse for indolence, an apology for lukewarmness. If it be lawful for you to long for heaven, because there you will enjoy the presence of your Lord, it is surely lawful for you to desire to press as near to your Lord as possible: the outer circle, the distant glimpse, the remote dwelling, ought not to be enough to satisfy your desire, or fill your heart. If it be lawful for you to covet heaven at all, because you will there serve God, surely it is lawful for you also to aspire to the honour of doing more for him than you could do in one of the lowest posts. Call not this a spiritual selfishness, or an unauthorized ambition: it is no such thing; is is a legitimate yearning of the soul after the glory to be revealed. This, this, is your business on earth, you are training for heaven; this is your work in the church militant, to be preparing for some post and place in the church triumphant. Is not this enough to make you in earnest? Can you believe this, and not be in earnest?

Awake, arouse, put aside your earthly-mindedness, mortify your corruptions? "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

III. And without this intensity of mind, what is your religion? Certainly not a source of pleasure, but of misery. An earnest religion is that alone which is a happy one. To drink into the pleasures of religion, we must drink deeply of religion itself. It is with the happiness of piety, as it is with ore in a mine, it lies far below the surface, and we must make a laborious descent to reach the treasure; but when reached, it is worth all the digging and toiling to get at it. Many professors, if they were honest, would say their religion is an encumbrance, rather than a privilege: it yields them no delight; they are strangers to the peace which passes understanding, and to the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. They occupy a position half-way between the church and the world, and do not enjoy the pleasures of either; they are spoiled for the one, without being fitted for the other. They have given up many of the fashionable amusements of the gay, and have received nothing in return; and hence they throw back many a longing look on what they have left. They were happier as they once were: they begin to think, and others think so too, that they are in their wrong place in being in the church of God, and were it not for the shame of retreat, they would be glad to be back again amidst former scenes. How much are they to be pitied, as well as blamed; and they are not few who thus have just religion enough to make them miserable.

IV. We live in an earnest age, and religion cannot

be expected to maintain its ground without corresponding decision and resoluteness of character. The human mind was never more active than it is now; the human heart never more engrossed; and in consequence, human scenes never came more thickly or rapidly crowding upon the public attention. There have been times when some one object has seized with a more absorbing power, and a more giant grasp, the intellect of the nation; such as a season of intestine commotion, of the dread of foreign invasion, of the prevalence of the plague, or other forms of pestilence; but these excitements have been of a kind which, while they occupied the mind, did not draw men away from, but drove them to religion, for succour and support. An awe of God, and a sense of the need of his interposition, came, in such circumstances, over the nation. While the tempest was rolling over them, and men's hearts were failing them for fear, they seemed to see Jehovah riding in the whirlwind, and directing the storm. God was recognized as coming near to them, wrapped in cloud, and speaking in thunder. But it is not so now: the personal excitement to a great extent, tends to shut out, and keep out, God from men's thoughts; and partakes, in some views and directions, of an atheistic character. Politics, both national and municipal, are engrossing, without being alarming; no spectral forms of national danger sober the minds of men. Trade is a passion, as well as a pursuit: science is all but miraculous in its discoveries, and is keeping our mind upon the stretch, in admiration of what it has done, and in expectation of what it may yet do. Art is continually surprising us with new inventions. The railway system has almost changed our mode and habits of existence.

We seem scarcely to be inhabiting the same planet as our forefathers. The press is astounding us with the rapid multiplication of its products. Our minds, hearts, hands, are all full, and what but an earnest piety can prevent our being totally swallowed up in the vortex, and carried away by the stream? If we have not an earnest piety in the midst of this earnestness for every thing else, we can have no piety at all. Men are so full of action as to have scarcely time to think: and what thinking they do carry on, is all of the earth, and therefore earthly. The idolatry of genius, the worship of talent, the ennoblement, almost the deification of man, characterizes our day. This generation seems in danger of thinking, or of acting, as if they believed there is nothing higher than human intellect. A sort of unacknowledged, unsuspected Pantheism is coming over us. God is by many shut out of his own world: nature is every thing, its Creator nothing.

Now we, as Christians, are in danger of being infected by this prevailing spirit. Men never wanted more religion, or wanted religion more, than we do now. Upon us depends whether the Supreme Being shall be any longer acknowledged by his creatures, or his very name sunk in oblivion: and we are not in the best state to resist the assault upon the foundations of our piety. Earnestness is going out of the church into the world: and unless it can be revived among us, the church will go on sinking into a state of feebleness and decay. Instead of the church permeating the world with its own spirit, it is receiving the spirit of the world into itself. Instead of directing, controlling, and sanctifying the spirit and manners of the age, it is itself directed, controlled, and contaminated by them.

Its own light has become pale, and is in danger of being extinguished by the mighty beams of a more intense luminary blazing from without. Earnest men of the world are crowding past, and thrusting aside, the professors of religion: and Christians, in such a state of things, cannot stand their ground, much less advance, without a robust and athletic piety. They will be borne down, lose their spirituality, become spiritless and weak, and soon cast off their religion as having none of the life with which all things around them are instinct.

And then what chance have they, unless they are as flames of fire, of kindling a single spark in the souls of others? Men of the world are too busy, too much pre-occupied, too intent on other objects, to be broken in upon and arrested, except by a most vigorous religion. They love excitement, and they will have it: they will go with the men who are alive and active; and what care they for a poor, dull, sleepy religion, a mere name, a profession half dead? "Yes," they say, "I am in earnest for this world, and I must be in earnest. I am made for activity. I have a vast fund of energy in my nature, which must be called out and employed, and I cannot put up with your drowsy tinklings, while the trumpets are sounding and calling me to the field. Show me a religion that is full of life, and vigour, and enjoyment, and I may then hearken to you, but not till then." We must meet this demand, and exhibit a religion that surpasses in earnestness even the energy of their pursuits. Every Christian church should appear to be the region of life, a hive without any drones, all busy for eternity, all engaged upon their own salvation and the salvation of the world: a scene which exhibits the union of activity and repose; where the one is

without weariness, and the other without listlessness; where the true secret of happiness is found in hope without disappointment, energy without exhaustion, happiness without satiety, and life is in its fullest vigour and richest enjoyment. Such should be every church, a peaceful haven inviting men to retire from the tossings and perils of the unquiet ocean of worldly troubles, to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of earthly interests are not permitted to invade; and yet where the happiest employment is combined with the sweetest and safest tranquillity.

V. Consider the combined and deleterious influence which is likely to come upon Christianity, from the engrossing power of some things, good in themselves, and evil only by their association with other matters, such as science, philosophy, and liberalism in politics; and the positive and increasing influence of others, such as Popery and infidelity, which are evil, only evil, and that continually.

Science of itself is of God, and would lead to him, if men would but give themselves up to its legitimate deductions, and would allow themselves to be guided whither it would conduct them, since its conclusions would infallibly direct them to the temple of revealed religion. But, alas, how rarely is this the case: the most distinguished of our scientific men stand without, or reach only the vestibule of the temple; and instead of pressing on to adore the Deity enshrined in the holy of holies, are contented to admire the fair proportions and stupendous magnitude of the sacred edifice. Science cannot, of course, be made to speak of God the Saviour and the Sanctifier, but it may be made a teacher of God the Creator. But how rarely is even this done; for

aught that is said of the supreme, intelligent, and benevolent First Cause, by many of our great teachers of nature's laws, we should be left to conclude that we lived in a godless world, and that we saw around us either the works of chance, or, at any rate, the productions of a Being whom it was not thought worth while to inquire after. Nor does the matter rest here, for many are endeavouring by science to lead us away from God, and are thus making the very works of the Infinite Intelligence a blazing galaxy to eclipse the glory of their Eternal Creator, and lure us to atheism or pantheism. And where this is not done; where neither the teacher nor the taught has any intention or wish to go astray from God amidst the boundless fields of a universe ever widening upon the exploring and astonished mind; yet how much danger is there, lest the surprising discoveries which are ever and anon bursting upon our view, should by their novelty and their grandeur render the old and long-established truths of revelation tame and insipid. How imminent, to cultivated minds, is the peril, when engaged amidst the all but overwhelming studies of geology, chemistry, astronomy, magnetism, electricity, and optics, of passing by, with heedless step and averted eye, that cross on which the Saviour loved and died! How sad, and yet how true, is it, that the more God reveals himself through the discoveries of science, the more he is forgotten, and even denied, as he reveals himself in the pages of his Word! What else can this be but the ancient disposition of not liking to retain the knowledge of God, and the ancient request, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?"

But even with pious people, who, in their more serious moments, trace up all science to God, and find

in his works cause for adoring wonder, gratitude, and love, there is need of caution, watchfulness, and prayer, lest a love for general reading, and the constant occupation of the mind in the fields of knowledge which are ever opening before it, should lead the heart away from God. Not a few, in soaring to the stars, or delving into the earth, or analysing substances and ascertaining properties, or studying theories of currency, population, and other matters connected with the wealth of nations, have lost their relish for the truths of the kingdom of God, and instead of feeling any longer the attractions of those things which the angels desire to look into, are wholly taken up with the objects of this material and visible world. This is the snare of our age, such an occupancy of the mind by the varieties of knowledge which are ever presenting themselves, as that there shall be neither room, nor time, nor taste, for religion. "The value, the uses, the pleasures, of knowledge, and the best means of acquiring it," is the cry of the age, and a very good one, in measure, it is; but then it is crying down, with many, every thing else; it is insidiously alienating men's minds from religion by throwing the great moral truths of revelation into the shadow of a material philosophy; and making them feel as if the tree of knowledge were the tree of life, or at any rate as if by eating the fruit of the former, they could dispense with the fruit of the latter, and could either do without heaven hereafter, or were fitted for it by the science they gain upon earth. Christians, as well as others, are in danger from this source, and instead of growing in grace and in general knowledge, which they may and should do, have grown in knowledge, but declined in grace.

Let me not be misconceived or misrepresented, as if I were writing against knowledge, or supposed it were an enemy to revelation and religion. No such thing. I am only pleading against it as the substitute for religion, as that which would be sufficient for man's moral and immortal self of itself without religion. I adopt the noble language of Mr Wells in his lecture upon the instruction of the labouring class

"If it be asked, What limits would you place on the education of the working classes? the answer is, 'none.' Teach them all you can by any means induce or enable them to learn. How far would you carry the instruction of the working classes? As far as possible. But, apart from this, who is afraid of knowledge, of sound, healthful intelligence? Of knowledge, the light and joy of souls! Of knowledge, the object for which minds were made, and their faculties given! Of knowledge, in capacity for which, man resembles his Maker; and in acquiring which he communes with all created things! Of knowledge, the foe of every thing infidel, sensual, and brutal! What page of history, science, or genuine poetry, must we close from any man, saying, Here knowledge is perilous, here ignorance alone is safety? Of what discovered facts in nature, of what refined productions of genius, must we say, 'These are the luxuries of the few alone?' If, indeed, only of the few, those few are not the favoured in circumstances, but the select in mind, and these may be found among the working classes in as large proportion as among the privileged classes; and wherever they may be found, there they should be sought, that at this uncostly and noble banquet of mind they may be welcome guests and joyful partakers. Lift up the people, cheer on the people, to as much acquisition of knowledge as possible. Raise every where the standard of the mind. If some, if many, so encouraged and helped, press upwards into higher departments and circumstances in society, so much the better. They will bring health and power with them into the ranks by which they will be hailed as brothers, not scowled upon as intruders. No, teach the people all they can learn, all they will learn."

Liberalism in politics, also, however excellent in itself, is sometimes made, by an abuse of it, to exert an influence far from friendly to genuine piety. The love

of freedom is, or ought to be, with every Englishman, both a principle and a passion; and he who does not wish to liberate the constitution of his country from the last remnant of servility which degrades or oppresses a free man, dishonours the soil which has been consecrated by the blood of patriot martyrs. But it must be confessed, at the same time, that the liberalism of our days has been seen too nearly allied, in some cases, with a spirit hostile to religion. There is no necessity it should be so; the very genius of Christianity is a spirit of freedom, and all its precepts are opposed to tyranny. It defends with impartiality the palace and the cottage, the prerogative of the monarch, and the rights of the subject: but unhappily the priest and the altar have been so often on the side of oppression, that the cause of freedom has been thrown too much into the hands of infidels: and there is no doubt that, in modern times at least, nearly the whole force of infidelity has been on the side of freedom. This proves the duty and necessity of all the friends of religion rallying round the standard of liberty, and not leaving such a cause in the hands of the foes of revelation. It is pre-eminently their cause; they have suffered more than any others from the iron heel and bloody sword of tyranny; and that which has trodden down their persons, has trampled their principles and their cause with them in the dust; so that liberty is to them not only a source of enjoyment, but a means of usefulness. The least leaning in them to the side of absolutism or servility is a sin against their holy religion, in its prospects and its hopes, as well as an offence against their own dignity and honour. Happily for themselves, happily for their cause, and no less happily for their country and the

world, they now live in an age when the principles of religious freedom are better understood and appreciated than in any preceding period of the world: and it becomes them more and more to take heed not to let it be the boast of infidels that they are the staunchest friends of liberty. Their liberalism goes to the destruction of religion altogether. Man, in their view, is not free as long as he is bound by, what they are pleased to call, the fetters of superstition. He is a slave while he bows to the yoke of God, and from this they are eager and officious to liberate him. Let any one read the organs of the extreme Chartist party, and he will see this is no false accusation. And even many of those who would spurn with disdain and loathing these infidel liberals, hold opinions of a very loose character on the subject of religion. The tendency of much of modern argument, policy, and legislation, is to represent all religions, as they are called, as equally good, that is in the opinion of many, equally worthless. Instead of endowing none, and thus leaving truth to its own strength, to fight its own battles under the protection and blessing of the God of truth, they would endow all, as being all equally deserving of public patronage and support. If by religious equality, nothing more were meant than the equality of all religious denominations in political rights, this is nothing more than justice; but if the equality of all religious sentiment be meant, as it is by many, this is concealed infidelity. When such a state of public opinion prevails among a large portion of those who have embraced liberal views in politics, is there not a danger of some corrupting influence coming over the minds of those professors of religion who having also embraced liberal opinions, are

brought by that association into contact with the infidel party? Is there not need of a vigorous piety to resist the insidious influence of this mischievous leaven? Is it not necessary for them to look up by prayer for Divine grace, that their politics, or at any rate their party in politics, may not be permitted to weaken and corrupt their piety? Liberalism is a good thing, and has a good object, but like other good things may be abused to a bad purpose; and that is certainly a bad use of it which either damps the ardour of religious affection, or loosens the hold of religious opinions.

It is quite unnecessary, after what has been advanced upon this subject in a former chapter, for me to advert at any length to the prevalence of the infidel spirit, in its open, avowed, and studious endeavours to undermine the foundations of our faith: I therefore now only refer to it, as another inducement to seek after a vigorous and manly piety to grapple with this foul spirit.

There is another enemy of our faith more plausible, more insidious, and therefore more dangerous, with which the church will soon have to contend, and the conflict with which is indeed already begun; and that is the philosophising, rationalising spirit which is coming over us from Germany. This, aided by the works of a popular English writer, is likely to diffuse itself over the cultivated minds of this country. It is already in some measure corrupting our orthodoxy, and in its progress will do yet more mischief, if not resisted by the tutors of our colleges, and the editors of our religious periodicals, (with some of whom it finds too much favour,) by our influential pastors, and by the well-instructed members of our churches. The pith of this system is the

old dogma of the early English free-thinkers, somewhat differently presented, that reason rather than faith is our guide in religious matters: and its tendency is to prove that Christianity is a worn-out system of superstition, and must now give place to something more rational and more accordant with the spirit and advancement of the age. The progress of this system is written in fearful characters by Dr. Merle D'Aubigné, in his interesting work lately issued, entitled, "Germany, England, and Scotland." After describing the progress of this system from the old Unitarian neology, to downright atheism, he remarks:

"Thus Germany has exhibited within the last few years a terrible, yet no doubt a salutary, spectacle. The great lesson to be derived from it is, to yield nothing when the truth of God is concerned. If we take but one step backwards, we give the first impulse to go a hundred, a thousand, and we know not what will be the end. Infidelity in Germany has not been confined to a few obscure writers, obliged to hide themselves in some corner, and reduced to communicate their blasphemies to a small number of contemptible adepts. Such may be the case in England, but it is far otherwise in Germany. These men have been listened to with favour by the cultivated classes. In the course of the summer (1845) while I was in Germany, a great meeting of German writers, for the most part infidel, was held at Leipsic; and there, one Mr Jordan, of Konigsberg, at a dinner of these literary men, proposed to toast The Atheists! .... I will not repeat the terms, their impiety makes me shudder: an icy coldness and dead silence pervaded the assembly.

"This modern impiety of Germany has been accompanied by great immorality; and as faith is manifested by works of charity, so does atheism show itself by the grossest materialism. The young German generation have declared in one of their organs that they will be free: throw off, as oppressive bonds, all laws of civil order, of ecclesiastical and religious institutions, and finally emancipate themselves from the yoke of moral principles.

"It is whispered that a young German party, forming at Oxford, is desirous of planting in England the doctrines of Hegel and Strauss. I do not know the opinions of that school; but if it belong to the

modern German philosophy, it is easy to see the course it will follow, and whither it will lead England. Oxford would thus pass from the extreme of superstition and formality (Puseyism), to the extreme of unbelief and materialism. I trust the British good sense, the practical sense of Englishmen, will confine these follies to a few men in a few colleges. Yet let us beware. If all the friends of Christian religion and morality do not increase in decision, holiness, and zeal, we may perhaps see them raising their heads in every quarter."

It is not, however, the gross and extreme developement of German philosophy which is to be expected and dreaded in this country. English individuality is too strongly marked not to impress upon it a peculiar stamp: its tendency will be greatly resisted and modified by our more practical understanding, and its grosser, and more polluted and polluting elements will be arrested in passing through the filter of our common sense philosophy; but even then, it is to be feared, it will come out strongly impregnated in many cases with neological principles. It may, as I have remarked in my work on "An Earnest Ministry," exert a baneful influence upon our young ministers, and though it may not corrupt their orthodoxy with positive error, may becloud it with the abstractions of metaphysics; and instead of leading them to seek the salvation of souls, by the simple yet powerful exhibition of truths that come home to the heart, may make them desire to excite admiration by novelties of speculation, that surprise and amuse the intellect. Nor is this the only danger, for many of their more intelligent and less pious hearers, especially the young, finding their taste for novelty gratified, their love of what is intellectual pleased, and their conscience hitherto not altogether easy, tranquillized by something not quite so pungent and searching as that which they have been accustomed to hear, will take up

with these new views, and push them on to a point much beyond that where the preacher has placed them. Even the more pious are in danger of having their minds too much alienated from the simplicity that is in Christ, of losing their relish for the substantial verities of the gospel, and acquiring a taste for something fresh, which they may deem more intellectual than the doctrines of grace. The life of faith is thus imperilled by substituting for that which alone can nourish its vital principle, a system which appeals exclusively to the reason.

It is this then that we have to fear, the elevation of reason, and the depression of faith: observant minds have already perceived signs of this, not to be doubted or mistaken, among some of the more intelligent members of our churches. The roots of our evangelical system are in danger of being eaten into by this canker-worm, and the heart of our experimental religion of being organically diseased, by this cold and paralysing intellectuality. Even some of our educated religious operatives begin to crave after something newer than the gospel, something more speculative than the doctrines of salvation, and something more rational than faith. Those who are not acquainted with the workings of the popular mind, and the progress of opinion, may smile at the apprehensions which are here expressed; but others, more attentive to the course of events, and therefore better acquainted with them, will be most ready to admit there is some ground for alarm, and abundant reason for caution.

Another source of danger must also be mentioned; and that is, the growing taste, in an opposite direction to that I have just adverted to, for formalism and super-

stition, a religion of forms and ceremonies, a devotion which shall have more to do with the imagination and the fancy, than with the understanding, the heart, and conscience, and which shall gratify the possessor of it in the allowed indulgence of his own self-complacency. This religion in its more modified forms, is Puseyism, and, in its full developement, Popery. The illusion that Popery can only flourish in dark ages, and in enslaved countries, begins to be dispelled by the facts that have lately transpired amidst the light of the nineteenth century, and the freedom of England. The increase of Popery in this country is no longer matter of doubt; and it is an astounding and somewhat alarming fact, that its efforts have kept pace with the extension of education, the circulation of Bibles and tracts, and the formation of institutions for its destruction. How shall we account for this? As Protestants we cannot for a moment allow that there is more in Romanism than in its antagonistic system to commend itself to the unbiased judgment of the impartial inquirer; no, it is to be accounted for by the greater earnestness of its advocates. And what a deep disgrace, an indelible blot is it, upon the advocates of Protestantism, that they should be exceeded in zeal by the votaries of Romanism: that the crucifix should be the fount of a deeper inspiration than the cross! How are we to account for that extraordinary fact, and solve that hard problem, that error, at least in very many cases according to appearances, excites in its abettors more fervid enthusiasm than truth does in hers?

Such, then, are the influences, powerful when viewed separately, how much more so when combined, which are exerted in this extraordinary age against religion:

and how are they to be resisted and vanquished? How shall the church bear up against such opposition? We know her Divine Head lives. The infallible, omnipotent Pilot is at her helm, and though the tempest rages, and the deep is stirred up from its very bottom, the holy vessel is safe. Yes, but even this divine Pilot demands the attention, the subjection, and the co-operation of the crew, and employs their instrumentality for the preservation of the sacred bark.

The danger is not to be warded off by mere systems of ecclesiastical polity: these, in proportion as they are brought into conformity with the Word of God, may do something; and may, and should be sustained with a zeal proportioned to their importance; but of themselves, without a pervading spirit of evangelical piety, they will be no better defence against Popery, infidelity, and an anti-christian philosophy, than would be a break-water of sand or wicker-work, against the Atlantic ocean in a storm. Nor will any mode of worship, whether arranged according to liturgical order, or left free for the occasion, be more effectual. No, nor the most approved orthodox systems of theology; the most noble, and even scriptural confessions of faith; nor creeds that can boast the highest antiquity, and the consent of the whole catholic church. The spirit that is coming over Christendom laughs at all these things, when left to themselves, like leviathan at "the shaking of a spear," "esteeming iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood." What did creeds, catechisms, and symbols, accomplish for Switzerland, where rationalism and unitarianism, in spite of them, have covered the scene of Calvin's labours; or in Germany, where they have

desolated the garden of the Lord, planted by Luther and Melancthon? A cold and heartless orthodoxy, however clear, wins no more respect from infidelity or philosophy, than the gorgeous rites of superstition. An effete and languid church; a church of which the vis vitæ of experimental religion is low, of which the pulse beats feebly and slowly, of which, whatever deceptive show of health there may be upon the countenance, the vitals are diseased, of which it may be said, Thou hast a name to live and art dead; such a church cannot stand the shock which may be made upon our faith.

What is it then which we must oppose to the swelling tide of opposition, should it rise against the evangelism of the New Testament, and by which we may invest the church with a power, not only to stand her ground, but to advance? What? Earnest religion. A church in earnest can never be vanquished, or even effectually opposed. It is the union of two things which ought never to be separated, I mean sound doctrine and the spiritual life; an intelligent, public, courageous profession of evangelical truth, and the inward power of that truth upon the affections; the clearness of a martyr's intellect to perceive the nature and the value of Christian doctrine; the ardour of his zeal in espousing it; the love of his heart in embracing it; and the resolute tenderness of his conscience in being willing to die for it. An enthusiasm of feeling which is not fed by an intelligent apprehension of doctrine, will soon expire of itself, or be extinguished by the breath of opposition: an emotionless, and merely scientific profession of doctrine, which leaves the heart without warmth, and the life without holiness, is scarcely worth retaining, and in

the hour of trial will be thought scarcely worth contending for, and either thrown away in contempt, or yielded up to the foe.

Let the orthodoxy of our churches be well and vigorously maintained: let there be no relaxation here: let the doctrines of the Trinity; the fall and inherent depravity of man; the atonement; justification by faith; regeneration by the Spirit; and the sovereignty of divine grace in man's salvation, be considered as the very life's blood of our piety; let these great fundamental doctrines or facts, (for such undoubtedly they are and as such should be considered,) be held fast by us, not as cold, dry dogmas, but as living principles of the heart, imparting and maintaining a new and vigorous existence to the soul; and then we may confidently and triumphantly bid defiance to the combined forces of all the enemies of religion and the church. There has come upon us of late years a kind of creed-hatred, so intense that many shudder at the idea of catechisms, confessions, and articles, as if, under all circumstances, they were a fetter upon our liberty, and a snare for our conscience. But is not this alarm groundless? Merle D'Aubigné's words on this subject are full of wisdom:

"As for those who know what salvation in Christ really is, what harm can the articles do them? None! indeed rather the reverse. Every true Christian has a spiritual life, an inward history, composed of distinct phases, faith, repentance, justification, and conversion; sanctification, peace, joy, and hope. It is requisite both for the sake of others, as for his own, that he should profess the great doctrines to which his inner life corresponds. Poor and ignorant Christians, and these are the greater number, would not know how to do this. If the church to which they belong presents to them an evangelical confession of faith, at once plain and profound, it renders them a very useful assistance. Theologians could, no doubt, without a creed, easily give utterance to their faith, but we must think first of the

poor and simple of the flock. Men of the world regard the Articles of Faith of the Reformation as antiquated forms, become unnecessary in the present age. This error arises from their having never experienced in their hearts that faith in Christ which is the same in every age. Those confessions of Christian hope which our fathers made even in the face of Rome, and for the sake of which so many martyrs have ascended the scaffold, can never grow old, can never lose that Divine fire which the Holy Spirit imparted to them. It has been said, 'The articles are useless to the church, the Bible is sufficient.' But most frequently, at least upon the Continent, those who will not have confessions of faith, will not have the Bible either. Very lately, one of the most eminent Protestant clergymen of Germany, Dr. Ammon, first preacher of the court at Dresden, a rationalist, but yet an enlightened theologian, made this candid avowal; 'Experience teaches us that those who reject a creed, will speedily reject the Holy Scriptures themselves.' The importance given to doctrine in the church of England is her safeguard. Without it, she would long ago have fallen beneath the assaults, not of rationalism, but of traditionalism and superstition. Let the ministers and members of the church set forth and maintain once more the pure doctrines of grace, as contained in the Bible, and stated in the thirty-nine articles; let them raise on high, and firmly wave that glorious standard, and the evil spirits will flee away."

In his remarks on Scotland, the same author asks,

"What has secured Scotland this eminent rank of being at the present period the vanguard of Christ's army? I hesitate not to reply, 'Her attachment to sound doctrine.' It is because doctrine is placed so high that the church meets with so much sympathy. Whenever doctrine is not cared for, the people care little for the church, and a miserable esprit de corps alone remains, which is the most opposed of any to a Christian spirit. The church itself is doctrine. The most characteristic distinction between the Christian church and Paganism, Mahomedanism and Deism, either pure or Socinian, is the Christian doctrine, as essentially different from the Pagan, Mahomedan, Deistical, or Socinian doctrines. This also distinguishes the Roman from the Protestant church. Observe, when I speak of doctrine, I do not mean a cold, arid, lifeless orthodoxy; I mean 'the doctrine which is according to godliness,' as the apostle says; 'that doctrine which produces life.' The Scottish theologian places himself at once in the centre of the Christian doctrine; it

is on faith in the reconciliation by the expiatory sacrifice that he takes his stand. This grand dogma, which tells us at once of the sin of man, and the grace of God; this fundamental doctrine, which contains on the one hand, the consciousness of our guilt, and on the other, the assurance of an irrevocable counsel of mercy and salvation, is the vivifying centre of Scottish theology. Faith in the Lamb of God who has borne the sins of the world; this is the milk with which the Scottish child is fed in the schools of the towns, the mountains, and the small plains; and the strong meat, whose nourishing juices are dispensed by the theologians of Edinburgh or Glasgow to the future ministers of the church."

All this is admonitory to us, and should remind us of the fact, and deeply impress us with it also, that it is only by holding up the truth as it is in Jesus as the principle of faith and spiritual life, we can hope to preserve the church from being imperilled by the spirit of the age. This is the true breakwater which alone can resist the billows of prevailing errors, and protect the vessels which lie peacefully at anchor in the harbour. Let our pastors diffuse these great doctrines among their flocks, and lift them on high in the pulpit. Let there, I repeat, be no coquetting with a false philosophy, and no complimenting, by the suppression of the truth, even a true one. The doctrines just before enumerated must be the very staple of their sermons. Let the people also look for, require, and live upon these truths. The man who habitually suppresses them, or studiously avoids them, with whatever of novelty, eloquence, or profundity of thought and expression he attempts to supply their place, should be viewed as a suspected man; he who sparingly introduces them, as a lukewarm man; and he only, who dwells much and earnestly upon them, as an acceptable man. In a philosophic age, and among an enlightened people, Paul "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him

crucified:" and it would be difficult for any man to find a reason why this rule of the apostolic ministry should be departed from in this day. True it is that ignorance would circumscribe the doctrine of the cross within narrower limits than the apostle intended, since every portion of revealed truth has its centre there; but still, the doctrine of the cross must be the great theme of preaching in every age, and in ours among the rest. I say, with all possible deliberation, and with equal emphasis, to the churches, let nothing less, nothing else than this, satisfy you. This is the bread of life which comes down from heaven for the nourishment of your souls; without which you will starve and perish. You can live on nothing else. Say therefore to your ministers, "Evermore give us this bread." Do not accept of the stones of metaphysics or logic, instead of this, or the flowers of rhetoric, or even the fruits of science or literature. Let your request be for bread, the living bread, which is Christ. It is no favourable sign of health when the palate has ceased to relish bread and meat, and is ever craving after novelties, and can be pleased only with the piquant dishes of an inventive, artificial, and foreign cookery. Such a taste indicates incipient disease, and prognosticates its increase. The parallel case in spiritual things is to be found in those hearers of the word of God who have grown tired of Bible truth, the bread and meat of the gospel, and can relish nothing but poetic sentimentalism, rhetorical imaginativeness, or religious Carlylism.

I do not mean to say that the whole system of Christ's mediation is to be brought into every sermon, for I am of opinion that the pulpit may be sometimes employed to explain and inculcate other subjects than

such as are strictly and exclusively doctrinal, but its predominant character should be truly and richly evangelical. It will be a dark sign of the approach of an evil day (and there are not wanting such portents upon our horizon already), when our churches in choosing their pastors shall be guided rather by a regard to talent than to piety, by a love of eloquence, rather than of the gospel.

Not that piety and love of the truth constitute the only qualifications of an able minister of the New Covenant; or should be the sole ground on which a church should make their choice of a pastor. By no means. We must have men of talent, especially for our more important stations; men that will command attention; men that will have power over the public mind, and do some justice to the high themes on which they discourse. But when talent is the first thing, and piety and sound doctrine are viewed as quite secondary matters; when the declaration is, not, "We want an able preacher of the gospel; a faithful shepherd; a vigilant watchman for our souls;" but "We must have a graduate, a scholar, an orator, a gentleman;" when this is the state of things, there is much reason for alarm in Zion. Let there be all these things; no man is the worse for them, and every man is the better for them, and the more he has of them, viewed as secondary qualifications, the better; but for Christ's sake, for the gospel's sake, for our denomination's sake, for the sake of immortal souls, and the salvation of a lost world, let them be viewed but as secondary, and the higher place be given to eminent piety and a love for the great truths which alone bring salvation. It is affecting, and fearfully predictive of what is coming, to see the popularity, in some

instances, of men who are grown wiser than the apostle Paul, as to the themes of their pulpit ministrations, and to hear the eulogiums pronounced on sermons which would have made him weep. Woe, woe, woe to us, when an all but Christless ministry shall be welcome, because it happens to be eloquent: when the doctrines of the atonement, justification, regeneration, and grace, shall be set aside as puritanic themes which do not suit the circumstances or the taste of this philosophic age.

I will here repeat, and insist a little more at length upon the fact, that it is not doctrine alone that will meet and successfully oppose the infidel spirit of this generation. This alone never has been sufficient to keep down error, and never will be. This, at most, will be but as the corpse and the panoply of the strong man armed, set up for the protection of the spiritual house: what is wanted in addition is the living soul, to supply the courage, the energy, and the power necessary for the defence. Infidelity will not run away in terror from the lifeless skeletons of our theological systems. In addition to what has been said of Germany and Switzerland, it may be said that all the Dissenting churches in this country had the Assembly's Catechism, and yet how many of them first lapsed into Arianism, and then into Socinianism. How was this? Just because there was doctrine, but no life. Persons were admitted to fellowship upon a profession of doctrine, without giving evidence that their doctrines had become the principle of spiritual life. Doctrine will not always preserve life, but life will always preserve doctrine. When religion is resolved into the reception of certain dogmas apart from their vital influence; and when this oneness of

mere sentiment, rather than a principle of spiritual life, a sympathy of heart, and a congeniality of soul, are made the basis and ground of fellowship, the church must be weak, and in no state to meet the attacks that are made upon it; and indeed is very likely soon to give up a creed, which having lost its chief purpose in renewing, sanctifying, and comforting the soul, has ceased to be of any value, and therefore of any importance. It is when the members all grow into Christ by a living faith, and into each other by love, that the body is strong both for defending itself, and carrying on aggressions upon the world. What is wanted for all times, but especially for this, is the union of the contemplative with the active life. Every age, almost, has its characteristic vices and defects.

"The Ascetics and the Mystics went off into one extreme: they sought in retirement, in a contemplative abstraction, and in seraphic raptures, a high degree of holiness and joy. Their contest was, not with sinful appetites, only with innocent ones; their following Christ was not in the rough and arduous paths of outward service, but in the concentration of powerful and pathetic meditations upon his cross and passion. The arena of their conflict was wholly within; and a great part of the struggle consisted in resisting the languor of overdone attention, arresting the vagrancy of volatile thoughts, and rousing the ardour of feelings which had expended themselves by their very intensity."

Our danger and defect lie in an opposite extreme. In this age of external activity, we want, could we but command it, more time, and more inclination to cultivate the hidden life, to strengthen its principle, and to allow its developement in all its beautiful and appropriate exercises of spirituality of feeling, heavenly-mindedness, and communion with God. The spiritual life with us is low and feeble, and for want of retirement,

reading the Scriptures, meditation, prayer, and rigid mortification, is not in a state to resist the attacks that may be made upon our faith. It is the energy of the heart, which, in the human frame, nerves the arm to defend the head; so is it in the spiritual system. Merle D'Aubigné, in the volume to which I have already so frequently alluded, furnishes by a recital of his own religious experience, a beautiful proof and illustration of this.

After his conversion to God, and after he had begun to preach Christ with fulness of faith, he was so assailed and perplexed in coming into Germany, by the sophisms of Rationalism, that he was plunged into unutterable distress, and passed whole nights without sleeping, crying to God from the bottom of his heart, or endeavouring by his arguments and syllogisms without end, to repel the attacks of the adversary. In his perplexity he visited Kleuker, a venerable divine at Kiel, who for forty years had been defending Christianity against the attacks of infidel theologians. Before this admirable man Merle D'Aubigné laid his doubts and difficulties for solution: instead of doing this, Kleuker replied, "Were I to succeed in ridding you of them, others would soon rise up. There is a shorter, deeper, and more complete way of annihilating them. Let Christ be really to you the Son of God, the Saviour, the Author of eternal life. Only be firmly settled in his grace, and then these difficulties of detail will never stop you: the light which proceeds from Christ, will disperse all darkness." This advice, followed as it was by the study with a pious fellow-traveller at an inn at Kiel, of Paul's expression, "Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all

that we ask or think," relieved him of all his difficulties. After reading together this passage, they prayed over it:

"When I arose," says this distinguished man, "in that room at Kiel, I felt as if my wings were renewed as the wings of eagles. From that time forward I comprehended that my own syllogisms and efforts were of no avail; that Christ was able to do all by his power that worketh in us; and the habitual attitude of my soul was to be at the foot of the cross, crying to him, 'Here am I, bound hand and foot, unable to move, unable to do the least thing to get away from the enemy who oppresses me. Do all thyself. I know that thou wilt do it, thou wilt even do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask.' I was not disappointed. All my doubts were soon dispelled, and not only was I delivered from that inward anguish which in the end would have destroyed me, had not God been faithful, but the Lord extended unto me peace like a river. If I relate these things, it is not as my own history, nor the history of myself alone, but of many pious young men who in Germany, and even elsewhere, have been assailed by the raging waves of Rationalism. Many, alas! have made shipwreck of their faith, and some have even violently put an end to their lives."

This interesting narrative is a most instructive one, as teaching that the defence of the Christian, and therefore of the church, the establishment of the individual member, and of the whole of the church in the truth, depends more upon faith than upon reason, and is to be sought rather in the grace of the heart, than in the strength of the intellect, and that therefore to become feeble in piety is to let down our defences, and to expose ourselves to the enemy. He who is "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man," and who is "rooted and grounded in love," though less skilful in argument, is in a far better condition to resist the subtleties of false doctrine, than he who is stronger in argument, but weaker in faith. The hidden life within him is vigorous; and rich in the enjoyment of divine

love, he is strong in the Lord and the power of his might: and though the strength of the human intellect, the chain of sound reasoning, and the conclusions of a just logic, when employed in elaborate defences of our faith, are of inestimable worth; yet after all, it is to the blessing of God on the internal vigour of her own piety, that the church is indebted for her stability, more than to these outworks, which are cast up from time to time, by her ablest defenders.

VI. I now mention as another inducement to seek an earnest religion, the circumstances of the age, viewed in connexion with the spread of Christianity, and as bearing upon the moral interests of the world. The church was never called to a greater work than she is at this moment, nor was the call of Providence upon her ever more loud, earnest, or unequivocal. There is no possibility of mistaking it, and there ought to be neither hesitation, delay, nor negligence in obeying it. That work is the conversion of the world; and for this all possible facilities in the way of means, instruments, and appliances, have been, and are still being collected. Let us look at the sphere of operation opened to us, let us survey the territory that is added to our foreign empire: there is nearly all Hindostan with its hundred and fifty millions of inhabitants, nearly every portion of which is accessible to our Christian influence, then there are Burmah, Siam, Cochin China, all beginning to receive missionaries; next come our colonies in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Van Dieman's Land, and the Cape of Good Hope. What a scope here for the energies and influence of the church, what a sphere to occupy and fill with our missionaries, our Bibles, and our churches! Let us dwell upon that most marvellous

and glorious achievement of modern times, the opening into China by five doors, which no power but that of Omnipotence can ever close, and through which our religion may pass to the teeming millions of that vast hive of human beings. We may mention Madagascar, closed against us at present, but which at the death of the present Queen, who, for aught we can tell, may die the next hour, or may be dead while this is being penned, will be thrown wide open to our holy enterprise. Can we forget Polynesia, yielding up itself, with its hundreds of islands, to the influence of the gospel?

Next, let us consider the means of rapid and safe communication opened across the ocean by steam navigation, and to the interior of countries by railways: so that oceans seem to be bridged over, and the extremities of continents to be brought near to each other. We may add to this that most surprising of all modern inventions, the electric telegraph, by which intelligence might be conveyed, as upon the lightning's wing, in a few seconds to the antipodes, if the wires could be laid or carried round the globe. Nor is this all, for we cannot but know how the arts have multiplied and cheapened all the means and instruments of the church's work; how chemistry, by its various appliances, has reduced the price of paper; how mechanics, by means of stereotype and the steam press, has lowered the cost of printing, till a bound copy of the whole Scriptures can be purchased for ten pence. Nor does the work of Providence stop here. What a marvellous progress has been made of late years in those researches which lie more remote from popular notice, and in their importance are less obvious to popular comprehension, but which have still a close connection with the spread of

Christianity in the world, I mean the discoveries which have been made by learned and exploring minds concerning the origin, affinity, and ancestry of nations, their languages, customs, religion, and traditions. The hieroglyphics of Egypt, hidden from the ages and generations that are passed, have at length yielded their secrets; while from its pictured tombs its history has obtained a resurrection, confirmatory in various ways of the truth of Old Testament history. The cuneform inscriptions of Perseopolis, like the mystic characters in the temples on the Nile, are beginning to be understood and decyphered. The analogies of the various systems of idolatry are being traced and exhibited. There are inquisitive and profoundly learned men, who amidst the shadows of the Pyramids, in the circles of the Druids, or before the massive rock temple of Iran,

"are thinking of the way, and showing it too, in which from the very first, man has been dealing with and corrupting the majesty of religion, and with him who of that religion is the Author and the Object. Every fane, every hieroglyphic, every ancient sculpture, and every curious legend, suggests some glorious truth, which man has laboured to improve by his own imaginations, but which is buried in the lie which man hath made."

Yes, but from that grave, dug by the hand of falsehood, shall those glorious truths arise, and be shewn by missionaries competent for the work, to the people who in their own superstitions, have had the sepulchres of truth.

Now let all this accumulation of means and instruments be taken into account, in their number, variety, and adaptation, and we shall certainly and impressively see what advantages we possess for doing a great work for God upon earth.

It is not, however, simply in this light that I view these matters; that is, as furnishing the opportunity for labour, but as being a loud and impressive call from God to embrace it. Under whose administration has all this been done, and for what purpose has he done it, within so short a space of time? These questions are answered by the apostle where he says, "He is Head over all things to his church." "Yes, science and the arts, commerce and war, philosophy and literature, are his pioneers for levelling mountains, filling up vallies, and preparing the way of the Lord in the desert, that his glory may be revealed, and all flesh see it together. The engineers, craftsmen, and literati, have had other objects in view: but who can for a moment doubt that he who raised up Cyrus of old to set free his people, has prepared these instruments to subserve his own purpose of civilizing and evangelizing all the nations? From every part of the world, and from every scene of human activity; from India and China; from the islands in the South sea; and from the continent of Africa; from the colonies and the West Indies; the sound is heard pealing over the land, "I the Lord have given you power and wealth, empire and dominion, ships, colonies, and commerce; and have added to all this, steam navigation and railways, printing by stereotype and by steam: for this also comes from the Lord, who teacheth man discretion, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. And now, by all these things, glorify me, and set up my kingdom in the world." Providence was never more conspicuous in its operations, never more intelligible and unmistakeable in its intentions, than at the present moment. Preparation is going on for some great moral revolution of our world: against

which infidelity, popery, and false philosophy, are arraying themselves in an opposition fierce and determined. The forces on both sides are still moving to the conflict already begun, and raging in the valley of decision. To be negligent, dilatory, and indolent now; to hang back and give up ourselves to personal ease and enjoyment now, is to bring upon ourselves the ancient denunciation upon a Jewish city, of whom Jehovah said in righteous indignation, "Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

But for such a work how indispensable is the qualification of intense and earnest religion! The work without this may go on; yet it will go on but slowly. It is not enough for Christians, in common with their fellow-citizens, to stand and wonder at the progress of events, and congratulate themselves on being born in an age of deep interest and importance; they must see in all these events, so many incentives to a fervent piety, as indicating the intentions, and sounding forth the call of Providence: and as presenting to them the great object, which, amidst all their schemes and activities, must be recognized and pursued as the end of their existence.

VII. The political aspect of the times supplies another motive to the church, for earnest and intelligent piety. I am now writing amidst the unlooked for and stupendous events which have occurred in France within the last few weeks, and which, as by an electric shock, have so rapidly extended their influence over the whole continent. In these tremendous convulsions we recognise the continuous throes of the fearful earth-

quake, which more than half a century ago convulsed all Europe to its centre; and we behold after a temporary lull, the continuance of the hurricane, which in its progress subverted so many thrones, and devastated so many nations. As then, so now, the friends of liberty are exulting in the prospects which are opening before the world. We are forcibly reminded of the eloquent language of Mr Hall, in surveying the first revolution in France;

"An attention to the political aspect of the world is not now the fruit of an idle curiosity, or the amusement of a dissipated and frivolous mind but is awakened and kept alive by occurrences as various as they are extraordinary. There are times when the moral world seems to stand still: there are others when it is impelled towards its goal with an accelerated force. The present is a period more interesting, perhaps, than any which has been known in the whole flight of time. The scenes of Providence thicken upon us so fast, and are shifted with so strange a rapidity, as if the great drama of the world were drawing to a close. Events have taken place, and revolutions have been effected, which had they been foretold a very few years [weeks] ago, would have been viewed as visionary and extravagant, and their influence is far from being spent. Europe never presented such a spectacle before, and it is worthy of being contemplated with the profoundest attention by all its inhabitants. The empire of darkness and of despotism has been smitten with a stroke that has sounded through the universe. When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumber, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones, who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his eyes to a theatre so august and extraordinary? These are a kind of throes and struggles of nature to which it would be a sullenness to refuse our sympathy. Old foundations are breaking up; new edifices are rearing. Prospects are opening on every side of such amazing variety and extent, as to stretch further than the eye of the most enlightened observer can reach."

Alas, for the vicissitudes of earthly affairs, and the vanity of human hopes! These jubilant and exulting

strains, penned in the year 1791, were soon succeeded by the following still more eloquent passage by the same writer, and in reference to the same events.

"It had been the constant boast of infidels, that their system, more liberal and generous than Christianity, needed but to be tried to produce an immense accession to human happiness; and Christian nations, careless and supine, retaining little of Christianity but the profession, and disgusted with its restraints, lent a favourable ear to their pretension. God permitted the trial to be made. In one country, and that the centre of Christendom, revelation underwent a total eclipse, while atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age, rank, and sex, in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre; that the imperishable memorial of these events might lead the last generations of mankind to consider religion as the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and to secure to every one his rights: to the laborious, the reward of their industry, to the rich, the enjoyment of their wealth, to the nobles, the preservation of their honours, and to princes, the stability of their thrones."

The contrast presented in these two splendid passages, between the expected and the real results of the first revolution in France, together with the disappointment experienced in the consequences of the second, should impose some caution in the anticipation of the effects of the third. A nation so slow to learn by the two previous visitations, affords but a feeble hope that it will profit much by the third opportunity of improvement which is now granted it. When it is considered that France is shared between a revived popery and a rampart infidelity, that there is a deplorable destitution of moral principle pervading all ranks, and that its political crimes against Algeria, Tahiti, and Spain, cry aloud to God for vengeance; and when to this it is added that its present situation is that of the most com-

plete ochlocracy* ever exhibited in a civilized country, there is reason to apprehend that what we have yet witnessed may prove only the prologue of a repetition of the same awful drama in that irreligious land.

Let passing events issue as they may, either in the dreadful struggles of another war, or in the quiet extension of political freedom, there is a high and sacred duty resulting to the church of God from the present posture of affairs. Our obligations are obvious and imperative. It is ours to survey the progress of the storm, not merely with the feverish excitement and fluctuating hopes of the mere politician, but with the serene confidence of the Christian. We must remember that Jesus Christ is "Head over all things to his church," and feel assured that the rise and fall of empires are subservient to the accomplishment of his purposes. It is the extension, not merely of liberty, however valuable and important that may be, but of religion, that must be in our hopes. Our prayers should be continually ascending to God, for the subjugation of all these changes to the wider establishment of that kingdom which cannot be moved. Special meetings for prayer ought to be held with reference to these events. How important it is, that whether the nations are to be scourged by war, or blessed with liberty and peace, they should have their attention drawn to the church, as by her eminent piety, the seat of repose and the circle of bliss! In what an attractive form, at once lovely and awful, should she appear to the children of men struggling and wearying themselves by seeking after that happiness in political reforms, which religion only

* Which now seems to be sinking, as all mob-governments generally do, into a military despotism.

can supply! Perhaps new openings are about to be made for the evangelization of the continent of Europe. Popery has little to hope, and every thing to fear, from the transactions which are going on in Italy, in France, and in Germany. The prospects of the Jesuits become more and more gloomy. The stability of the Papacy itself is coming into jeopardy. The very seat of the Beast totters. On the other hand, infidelity is becoming emboldened, even to audacity, by these changes: and there is no doubt that it has had some hand in bringing them about, for infidels have been often God's pioneers. Christians, rarely has Providence addressed you with a voice more impressive than that by which it now speaks to you. It is possible that every obstruction in the way of spreading the gospel on the continent, may be about to be removed, by the proclamation of freedom of conscience, and the liberty of the press. You, therefore, should be preparing yourselves by a fresh baptism of the Spirit for your high vocation. Rise, O rise, above the region of politics, into that of religion. Connect with all that is going on, the idea of a grand developement of God's plan of mercy for our apostate world. Feel as if you must for, and by these things, be men of stronger faith and more fervent prayer. Let it be a conviction deeply rooted in every mind, that there needs for such an age, and amidst such revolutions, a new and grander exhibition of the excellence of religion, and the power of the church. By the depth of your own convictions, and the intensity of your own hope that all now going on is but a preparatory process to usher in an evangelical era of European history, labour to communicate this idea, and to awaken this expectation

in the public mind. Endeavour to make all men feel, that for the world's happiness there is something to be obtained, better than even liberty, and without which freedom itself cannot be fully enjoyed, nor permanently secured. Let the church be seen as a light-house to guide the nations of the earth into the haven of safety and peace.

CHAPTER IX.

EXAMPLES OF EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

Earnestness means intensity of feeling leading to vigorous and determined action; and what is so likely to produce this as example? Principles instruct us, precepts guide us, but example moves us. Example is principle and precept embodied, living, and in action. We see not only what is done, and what ought to be done, but what can be done, and how it is done. It appeals to all our faculties at once, it fixes the attention, engages the imagination, instructs the judgment, moves the heart, subdues the will, awakens the conscience, and assists the memory. Its motive power is astonishing. Let us therefore look at examples of earnestness for laymen, as in a former volume I have selected some for the ministry.

Were it not undesirable to swell out this volume to an undue extent, it would be well to bring forward some examples of earnestness in the cause of evil, that Christians, by this means, might be stirred up to more full devotedness in the service of God. What intense activity has ever been exhibited by the worshippers of idols is proved by the facts of history and the records of Scripture. Isaiah xliv; Jeremiah vii, 17: 1, 38. Are Mahommedans usually lacking in zeal for their

religion, or lukewarm in professing or diffusing it? What shall we say of Popery, which has breathed such an inspiration into its votaries that every man becomes a zealot as soon as he is a papist? How is it, then, that these votaries of a false religion are more in earnest than so many of the followers of the true one?

If we look at the followers after wealth, science, fame, how much do we see that confirms the truth of our Lord's words, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Happily, however, for the honour of pure Christianity, we may see among its professors, instances of devotedness, not to be surpassed in any other classes or communities on the face of the earth. If we turn to the scenes which followed the day of Pentecost, as described by the historian of "The Acts of the Apostles," we shall find something more lovely than was ever exhibited in our world. Then, let us think of the martyr-age, when the Christians went in crowds to the scaffold, the stake, and the lions of the amphitheatre. Following on the bloody track of persecution, we may turn our eyes to the Alpine heights of Piedmont, whither the Waldenses retreated from the fury of the papal beast. Or if in modern times we would look for instances of earnestness, we may find them in the zeal of "The United Brethren," or Moravians, as they are called; who, when their whole society amounted only to six hundred poor despised exiles, sent out missions, in the short space of nine years, to Greenland, St. Thomas's, St. Croix, Surinam, the Rio de Berbice, the Indians of North America, the Negroes of South Carolina, Lapland, Tartary, Algiers, Guinea, the Cape of Good Hope, and the island of Ceylon.

But as individual instances will have more power than a reference to collective bodies, we will now look at some of these. Have we forgotten John Howard the philanthropist, who under the influence of Christian philanthropy, for he was a Christian in the spiritual sense of the term, left his elegant retreat in Bedfordshire, to traverse the length and breadth of Europe, and spend his life,

"In diving into the depths of dungeons, and plunging into the infection of hospitals, to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain, and to take the gauge of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to collate and compare the distresses of men of all ages."

But perhaps examples bearing more directly upon efforts for the spread of religion will be thought most appropriate, and I proceed, therefore, to exhibit some few of these.

I first hold up for the imitation of men of wealth, two individuals, worthy to be associated on the same page, and deserving of everlasting remembrance by the church of God. The first is the eminent John Thornton Esq. of Clapham, a name never to be mentioned but with reverent affection. This gentleman was a London merchant, who by the high moral principle which guided all his secular pursuits, and the munificent distribution of his large profits, was one of those who inscribe upon their merchandize, "Holiness to the Lord." He was by profession a member of the Church of England; but neither his piety, his charity, or his liberality, could be restrained within the limits of any one section of the Christian community. His heart was too large to be confined within any party of narrower dimensions than the universal church.

So that the cause of evangelical religion could be promoted, he scarcely asked the question whether it was done by churchman or dissenter: his heart, his lip, his purse, were opened to all like. Aware that the preaching of the gospel is God's great instrument for the conversion of sinners, he was zealous for the education of pious young men for the work of the Christian ministry, and from his own purse was mainly instrumental in establishing, and for awhile supporting, the dissenting academy at Newport Pagnell, then under the care of the Rev. T. Bull. What a noble effort of piety and charity for a churchman! In this labour of love he was assisted by his friend, the Rev. John Newton, of St. Mary, Woolnoth, and the Rev. John Clayton, the highly-respected dissenting minister of the Weigh-House Chapel, London. In pursuance of the same object, he purchased church livings, to bestow them upon men who preached the pure gospel; and was ever ready to contribute large sums, or smaller, as the case might require, for the erection or enlargement of churches in the establishment, or chapels among dissenters. He scarcely ever turned away a well-accredited case. Often while he was transacting business with merchants or his own captains in his counting-house, applicants for his bounty would be waiting for their turn of audience in the outer one; and the latter were made as welcome to take away his wealth, as the former were to bring it in, and would be received with a smile as cordial. In his ships large numbers of Bibles and good books were often sent with his merchandise to the distant nations of the earth. In subserviency to religion, and from the most enlarged and expanded philanthropy, Mr Thornton liberally patronised every under-

taking which was intended to relieve the distress, or increase the comfort, of the human species; so that it would have been difficult to mention one private or public charity of his day, to which he was not a benefactor. To support such numerous and expensive designs of usefulness, without embarrassing his affairs, or interfering with the real interests of his family, he avoided all extravagance in his domestic establishments, and acted upon the principle that frugality is the best purveyor for liberality. He spent little upon himself, in order that he might have the more to spend for God and his fellow-creatures. Nor was it only his wealth that he thus devoted, though the sums he spent must have been immense, but he gave also his time and his labour. He lived to do good: he pursued it as a business, and he enjoyed it as a pleasure. He was as earnest in giving, as most men are in getting. Such was the good, the eminent John Thornton, the Christian philanthropist of Clapham.

Thomas Wilson Esq. of Highbury, whose memory will ever be fondly cherished as long as liberality in the cause of God shall be esteemed a virtue, was at first partner in a first-rate house in the silk trade, in London. This he quitted in his early manhood, when bright prospects of worldly advantage were opening before him, to devote himself wholly to the cause of God, and the spiritual welfare of his fellow-creatures. It may be justly questioned whether it would not be better, in most cases, for pious and wealthy men to remain, like Mr Thornton, in business, and consecrate their profits to Christ, than retire from it. This would augment their means of usefulness by the acquisition of greater wealth, and by the influence they exert over other men

engaged in trade. Occasionally, however, it is well for an individual, as in the present case, to give up altogether secular pursuits, and yield himself, as well as his property, to God. The time and attention of one such man, as well as the property of many other men combined, are needed for the benefit of our institutions. Mr Wilson's excellent father had been treasurer of the dissenting college at Hoxton, for the education of ministers, which has been since removed to Highbury. To that office he succeeded at the death of his father, and in it he has been followed by his son, Joshua Wilson Esq. From the time of his official connexion with this important situation, he became, in the best sense of the term, a public man. To his patrimonial inheritance, which was handsome, though not in the widest meaning of the expression affluent, he had a large accession by the death of a maternal uncle, which afforded him an opportunity, had he chosen to embrace it, to add much to the splendour of his style of living. He preferred rather to consider it as furnishing him with fresh means for glorifying God, in promoting his cause.

Mr Wilson was one of the fathers and founders of the London Missionary Society, and at the time of his decease was its treasurer. He was a liberal patron of all the religious societies of the day. But the object of his chief attention, care, and solicitude, was the college: and in this, and undertakings connected with it, he embarked his time, his influence, his bodily labour, and to a considerable extent, his fortune. To fill the college with students, to help to support many of them during their academic course, to select the churches with which they should be settled, and where necessary, to build chapels for them to preach in, formed

the noble object of his existence. To carry out this end, he had his office, his clerk, and his correspondence; and he devoted himself to it with the same assiduity as did the merchants around to their commerce and their gains. His office afforded to his denomination the advantage of a registration of ministers wanting churches, and churches wanting pastors: and his private residence also was ever accessible to all who had any communication to make, or wished his counsel. What multitudes have been his guests, and have shared his unostentatious, but generous hospitalities!

Touched with the destitution of the metropolis, as regarded adequate evangelical means of instruction, he erected at his own risk, and mainly at his own cost, four spacious chapels, Hoxton, Paddington, Craven, and Claremont. Nor was his munificence confined to London, for he built new and elegant places of worship at Ipswich, Northampton, Richmond, and Dover. Besides this, he contributed, in sums of from five hundred to fifty pounds, to the enlargement and erection of eighty other chapels, and in smaller amounts to hundreds more. He could not have spent less than fifty thousand pounds in the service of his Lord. It was not, however, the amount of money that constituted the whole of his earnestness, but the surrender of all he was, and all he had, to the work of God. He lived for these two objects, to educate ministers, and to build chapels. At home and abroad, by correspondence and personal inspection, by receiving information and seeking it, he was ever labouring to carry out this design. Age did not paralyse the ardour of this devoted and unwearied man, nor dismiss him from his beloved employ. When too feeble to go to his office in town, its business was

brought to him at his house. The last interview I had with him, was not long before his decease, when, though attenuated by disease and suffering from pain, his countenance brightened up as he shewed me a letter which he had just received from a minister whom he was anxious to secure for one of the chapels he had erected in the metropolis.

No one reading this brief account, much less any one who knew the subject of it, can doubt that Mr Wilson was a fine specimen of the earnest man. Let men of fortune contemplate this bright example, and go and do likewise. Let them here learn the real design of Providence in bestowing wealth, and their own richest enjoyment in appropriating it. What a service does that man render to the cause of religion through all time, and the souls of his fellow-creatures through all eternity, who erects only one place of worship, or educates only one minister for the preaching of the gospel!

Men of leisure and literature will find an admirable example of intense activity and continued labour in the cause of public usefulness, in the late George Stokes Esq. This gentleman also commenced life as a partner in a large wholesale silk establishment. He had received a good classical education at Merchant Tailor's School, in London. While yet comparatively a young man, and much engaged in business, he connected himself with that inestimably valuable institution, the Religious Tract Society, as one of its committee, and placed no divided heart upon its altar. In addition to the ordinary duties of a committee-man, he soon brought his literary taste and acquirements under requisition, for the benefit of the Society, and wrote several tracts, which were

adopted, printed, and widely circulated. When the Society felt any pressure upon its finances, Mr Stokes's purse was as much at its command as his pen. At the meetings of the committee he was always present, when not prevented by sickness or absence from home; and was often in daily attendance at the depositary for a long time together. He wrote several of the annual reports, and proceeded with ever increasing zeal and ingenuity to multiply by his own pen the productions issued by the Society. The series of hawker's tracts, and children's books, the Tract Magazine, and the subsequent issue of larger works, owed much to his inventive mind and ever active pen. The stereotype plates for some of the earlier issues of religious books cost him six hundred pounds. In all his labours he was most ably assisted by his invaluable friend, and the Society's incomparable agent, Mr William Lloyd. His greatest work was his preparation of the Society's Commentary upon the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. In the accomplishment of this he employed five years, and was often engaged upon it eight hours a day. It is needless to say he had long since resigned the active duties of worldly business to devote himself to his gratuitous, extensive and unwearied labours, in the cause of the Religious Tract Society. Mr Stokes died at Cheltenham on the 31st of May last, in his fifty-eighth year; soon after which a resolution of sympathy with his family, of gratitude to God, and admiration of his life and labours, was passed by the Society, of which the following is an extract.

"The committee now feel it their duty to record upon their minutes the interesting fact, that Mr Stokes prepared for the Society about two hundred separate tracts, translations, juvenile and other larger

volumes; including, 'The Commentary on the Holy Bible;' 'The Writings and Lives of the British Reformers;' 'The English History;' and various works on 'The Manners and Customs of the Jews;' and that in addition to all these important publications, he zealously and disinterestedly discharged for twenty-two years, the duties of one of the editors of the Tract Magazine and the Child's Companion."

Of these various publications nearly fourteen million copies have been issued by the Society. Well might Mr Jones, the admirable travelling agent of the Society, in his "Recollections of the late George Stokes Esq.," remark,

"We learn here, the power of a single individual to do much good. Mr Stokes was a man of useful, rather than of splendid, talents. He was not a literary miser. He collected knowledge that he might freely impart it. His light was not put under a bushel, but was seen of men, and gave light to those around. He lived not to himself. Without being fully conscious of it, he so shone before men, through his numerous and useful works, that many were led to glorify his heavenly Father."*

I now bring forward two instances from humble life, for the instruction and encouragement of those in a similar situation. The first is Thomas Cranfield, of whom an interesting memoir has been published by the Religious Tract Society, under the title of "The Useful Christian." Thomas Cranfield was the son of a journeyman baker in Southwark, and as he grew up to youth, became a wicked, cruel, and brutish lad. He absconded from his master, enlisted into the army, and was at the siege of Gibraltar. He was a brave soldier, and reckless

* If I had wished to enlarge this enumeration of examples of earnestness in the cause of humanity and religion, I might have mentioned those indomitable champions in the cause of the down-trodden Negroes, Clarkson and Wilberforce; that unwearied philanthropist, Reynolds, of Bristol; and that extraordinary man, William Allen, whose Memoirs, just published, cannot be read without a salutary influence in the way of exciting benevolent activity.

of danger, but a slave of sin and Satan. On his return to England, he was taken to hear Mr Romaine preach at Blackfriars. His hard heart was broken down by the hammer of the word, and his pious parents soon had the ineffable felicity to see their soldier-son enter, heart and soul, into the service of the Captain of our salvation. Having found joy and peace in believing, he became intensely anxious and active for the salvation of others. His first solicitude was for his wife, who soon became a fellow-heir with him of the grace of life. He then sought the conversion of her relatives, as his own were already Christians. The next objects of his pious zeal were the lodgers in the house where he resided, two of whom became, by their conversion, the fruits of his labours. Soon after he acted as clerk to an out-of-door preacher, who proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation to the multitude in Moorfields. Then he joined in setting up a prayer meeting among the brick makers at Kingsland. At length, panting for a regular means of doing good, rather than these casual efforts, he opened a Sunday-school at Rotherhithe, where he had witnessed some awful scenes of juvenile depravity. Finding at length some one to conduct this institution, he directed his views to Tottenham, and opened another there. Founding and conducting Sunday-schools now became his vocation, to which he surrendered himself with all the ardour with which he had fought his country's battles on the heights of Gibraltar. School after school was opened by him in many of the darkest and rudest places in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, of which he was the teacher, the superintendent, and the purveyor, finding friends to assist with their money, and teachers by their labours. To the duties of a superin-

tendent of Sunday-schools, he added those of a visitor of the sick, till Thomas Cranfield became known as a friend of the young, the sick, and the poor, through whole neighbourhoods. What he wanted in order and method, he made up in zeal and perseverance. Attending to the children individually as well as in school, he visited them at their homes, and wrote to them letters enough to make a volume. He looked after them when they had left the school, followed them to their domiciles, or assembled them at a meeting of "old scholars." At one of these gatherings, amounting to about sixty, it was ascertained that fourteen of those present were members of churches, and that there was scarcely one who did not attend a place of worship. The lodging-houses, those dark domains of Satan, where filth, ignorance, and vice, seem all condensed together, did not escape his notice, or daunt his courage, and he rendered many of them accessible to the light of truth, and the glad tidings of salvation. Thus lived and laboured Thomas Cranfield. Time blunted not his religious sensibilities, and he bore fruit to old age; at fourscore, he was still lively in desire, though feeble in action, in the cause of his Master. Half a century he had laboured as a devoted Sunday-school teacher, and tired not to the last. This once profligate youth, and brave but wicked soldier, when he died, was honoured with funeral obsequies, which the hero under whom he served at Gibraltar, might in vain have coveted to enjoy. O, for more Thomas Cranfields!

Harlan Page, is more than worthy to be associated in these biographical etchings, with the last mentioned philanthropist, for though not superior in piety or devotedness to Thomas Cranfield, he was before him, both

in talent and in usefulness. Harlan Page was a native of Connecticut, in the United States. His father was a joiner, to which trade he also was brought up. He was converted to God when about twenty-two years of age. "When I first obtained a hope," he said on his dying bed, "I felt that I must labour for souls. I prayed year after year that God would make me the means of saving souls." His prayer was soon answered: for whoever presented such a prayer, and followed it up with appropriate and diligent exertions, that had not his desires gratified? Three days after he publicly professed his faith in Christ, he began his useful career by addressing a letter to one who had been long resisting conviction and hardening his heart. Letter writing now became his chosen means of doing good; and this instrumentality he scarcely ceased for a single day, to employ. He addressed himself to relations and strangers, to friends and foes, to the rich and the poor, to saints and sinners, to persons in all states and stages of religious experience, and to the young and old, with a diligence that is surprising. No lover of wealth or literature was ever more assiduous in correspondence than was this pious carpenter. When lying on a sick-bed he would employ himself in thinking in what new ways he could be useful; and when recovered, it was his first solicitude to put his plans and purposes in execution. His next means of saving souls, was the printing and circulating small cards, with a short and impressive address composed by himself, on some of the momentous truths of revelation. The distribution of tracts was added to the circulation of cards. His object then was to promote prayer meetings, and revivals of religion among his fellow members. On one occasion he had

entered in his private memoranda short notices of seventy-nine individuals under concern, among whom he was ever active in promoting their spiritual welfare. His pen was as busy as his tongue, and he was always preparing addresses for publication in some of the religious periodicals, which were full of point, pathos, and unction.

"While working at three shillings a day, here was a mechanic performing his daily task on hire, establishing and sustaining a religious meeting at the boarding-house, on Wednesday evenings; a meeting of the people of God for prayer on Sabbath mornings at sun rise; and though he went three miles to attend public worship, throwing his efforts into a Sabbath-school at five p.m.; devoting Sabbath evenings to meetings and family visitation; conversing with the sick, the careless, the anxious; distributing tracts; endeavouring to awaken an interest in the religious operations of the day; keeping a brief diary; abounding in prayer; and adopting, with others, an incipient measure for the formation of a church and the settlement of a pastor."

At length, Harlan Page was appointed Agent of the General Depository of the American Tract Society, which opened to him a new sphere of activity and usefulness, and which he filled with his accustomed energy. He assembled, from time to time, all the tract distributors, companies of Sunday-school teachers, and others, to instruct them, as a kind of drill sergeant in the army of the Lord, in their several duties. The great temperance movement received his hearty co-operation. During all these labours for others, he was no less assiduous for his own family, and had the joy of seeing his children walking in the truth. It may be truly said he was animated by as much as is ever found in imperfect humanity, of the passion for saving souls; and for this he would have been willing to become a martyr.

Yea, in some sense he was a martyr, for his constant labours wore out a frame, never robust; and after having saved by his varied instrumentality more souls than most of those who bear the ministerial office, he died, at the comparatively early age of forty-two; and has left an example of earnestness in doing good, which were the church of Christ disposed to imitate, our world would soon be rescued from the dominion of sin and Satan, and recovered to its rightful owner, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us hear this dying saint say, "I know it is all of God's grace, and nothing that I have done; but I think that I have had evidence that more than one hundred souls have been converted to God through my own direct and personal instrumentality:" and having heard it, let us consider what one man in humble life, with by no means a strong bodily frame, but with a heart burning with an ardent desire to be useful to men's souls, can do, when he is given up to this blessed and sublime occupation. Suppose every Christian congregation were blessed with ten such individuals, yea five, yea one, what a shower of blessings might be expected to fall upon the neighbourhood in which they live. Here is earnestness indeed. It would not be easy to think of a means more likely to rouse Christians to a sense of their capacity and obligations for doing good, than the perusal of the cheap memoirs of this wonderful man, which also has been re-published in this country by the Religious Tract Society.

We will now contemplate two or three examples of female earnestness selected for that sex which has ever distinguished itself for zeal in every good cause, and especially in that of religion. In the time of the Saviour they were his most constant and devoted followers, were

last at the cross, and first at the sepulchre; and since then, have in every age shewn the ardour of their love by distinguished services.

The first instance is selected from the peerage, and is the well-known Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. This extraordinary woman was from a child of a serious disposition, and in mature life maintained amidst all the elegance and gaiety of Donnington Park, a devout turn of mind. She, however, for a long time laboured hard to establish her own righteousness; till by conversation with Lady Margaret Hastings, a near relative of her husband, she learnt God's method of justification by faith. Whitfield and Wesley were then in the midst of their labours and the zenith of their popularity and usefulness. Lord and Lady Huntingdon immediately patronised the new doctrine, and were the followers of Whitfield wherever he preached. Connected by her rank with nobility, and by her habits with literary men, wits, poets, and statesmen, what decision, fortitude, and even heroism it required, not stealthily and by night, but boldly in the face of day, to connect herself with the sect everywhere spoken ill of, and ridiculed as a band of ignorant fanatics! Such qualities were possessed by the subject of this sketch. She became to a certain extent the patroness of the despised preacher at "the Foundry." Her saloon was thrown open to his preaching, where Lord Chesterfield, the high priest of the god of fashion, Lord Bolingbroke, and many other peers and peeresses, would not unfrequently be found at her ladyship's solicitation, listening to Whitfield, now appointed to be her chaplain. It was while this great man was on a visit to Lady

Huntingdon's seat, at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and chiefly at her instigation, that the Tabernacle, in London, was planned. By this time, her fortune, which was never very large, and her influence, which was very great, were both put in requisition to meet the expense of the erection of the Tabernacle, Tottenham Court chapel, and other places of worship. Mr Berridge, of Everton, Mr Rowland Hill, Mr Matthew Wilks, and all others of their style of preaching, whether in or out of the Church of England, became her protegés. She was still professedly a member of the Established Church, but loved the gospel, and all who preached it, infinitely more than she did the Church. Lay preaching, and out of door preaching, met with her entire concurrence and liberal support. Chapels now were engaged by her wherever she could obtain them, to the full extent of her means: and it was her special delight to buy theatres, when they were to be obtained, and so turn into houses for saving souls, those places which had been formerly employed for destroying them. Wherever a revival of religion took place, in the Establishment, or in any other denomination, her influence was sure to be engaged.

After studding the land with chapels, supplying them with ministers, and supporting them in many cases from her own purse, she aimed at nobler game, and established a college at Trevecca, in South Wales, for the education of ministers; and I have lying before me, at this moment, a list of the names of ministers, amounting to one hundred and twenty five, many of them of considerable celebrity, who were educated in this seminary. When the lease of the premises at Trevecca

expired, the college was removed to Cheshunt, Herts, where it now continues, under the able presidency of Dr. Harris: and already have nearly two hundred ministers been educated for the preaching of the gospel, in that seat of holy and general literature. A religious connexion was formed, which bore, and which still bears, the name of this distinguished lady. Her personal exertions in these works of faith, and labours of love, were unbounded. She lived for nothing else. Rank, fortune, and influence, were valuable in her eyes, only as they enabled her to glorify God, advance the kingdom of Christ, and save immortal souls. All she possessed, she consecrated to the Redeemer of the world, and his cause on earth. She kept no state, she incurred no expense, in order that she might give all to the Saviour. She was often involved in considerable difficulties for want of money, not like many of the nobility to meet her debts for gambling or extravagance, but for buying or erecting chapels. Having determined to erect a place of worship at Brighton, and being at the same time rather straitened for money, she came to the noble resolution of selling her jewels, and with the produce, amounting to nearly seven hundred pounds, she built the chapel in North Street, in that town, now occupied by the Rev. Joseph Sortain. This was one of the most interesting sacrifices of vanity ever made at the shrine of religion. How truly may it be said of that place of Christian worship, with an alteration of the future into the past time, "I have laid thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires, and I have made thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones."

Such was Lady Huntingdon. How correctly has it been said by her biographer,

"The value of such a life can never be ascertained till the heavens and the earth be no more; and when temporal happiness and misery shall have vanished like the illusion of a dream, thousands, and tens of thousands, will be thankful that she lived so long, the faithful servant of God, and the happy instrument of their conversion."

Here was earnestness indeed!

But few have such opportunities for service in the cause of Christ as this illustrious woman, and I therefore descend to others nearer the ordinary level of human life. From these I select that noble-minded woman, Mrs. Fry. This lady, as is well known, was a member of the Society of Friends, or Quakers as they are commonly called. After spending her youth in worldliness and vanity, and with an inclination to scepticism, yet still amidst many struggles with a conscience which urged her to higher pursuits, she was converted to God by the preaching and conversation of William Savory, an American Quaker minister, who visited this land on a religious mission. Little did this holy and self-denying servant of the Lord imagine when he set his foot on the shores of Britain, what a convert he was about to win to the cross of his Master. Had he lived only for that one object, his existence would have been a rich blessing to our world. Mrs. Fry's piety, from the commencement of her religious life, partook of the ardour of her natural temperament. To the contemplative duties of religion, she soon added the assiduities of an active benevolence; and when surrounded by the cares of married life, and the anxieties of a mother with an increasing family, and a feeble constitution, she notwithstanding devoted much time to

visiting the poor. She grew in grace amidst bodily suffering, and became eminent for the power of the hidden life. She was appointed visitor of the school and workhouse of the Society of Friends, at Islington; upon the duties of which, notwithstanding her multiplying cares at home, she entered with alacrity, humility, and self-devotedness. Her active mind soon after this became anxious to form an establishment for the welfare of female servants. That mysterious, interesting, but degraded race, the Gypsies, did not escape her notice, and she visited their little camp as often as it was pitched in her neighbourhood; relieving their wants, reproving their sins, and furnishing such as could read with books. After speaking occasionally in their meetings, the Friends acknowledged her ministry as one whom the Lord had called. This devolved upon her new duties and frequent journies.

At length the attention of Mrs Fry was called to the female prisoners in Newgate, who at that time were in the most deplorable condition, both physically and morally. Hundreds of these wretched beings were huddled together in filth, vice, and confusion; and often enfuriated to madness with ardent spirits, which were then allowed to be sold in the prison, till the place resembled a pandemonium. She was now the mother of eight children, and could she with such a charge find leisure, and for such an object find courage, to venture into that den of revolting and outrageous wickedness? Or could she hope even by her calm and gentle presence to control that band of furies? Against the remonstrances of some, the fears of more, and the despondency of nearly all but her own heaven-moved mind, this

angel of mercy descended into that dark domain of vice, which had acquired the designation of "hell above ground." Her presence so benign, her voice so musical, her disposition so affectionate, and her whole manner so gentle and yet so confiding, awed the rude spirits which collected around her. Such a form of sanctity and mercy had never before been seen in that abode of vice and misery: and an immediate impression in her favour was produced upon the minds of the female culprits whom she had gone to instruct. At her instigation, "An Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners in Newgate," was formed, of which, of course, she was the chief agent. Their operations were seconded by the civic authorities, and soon evinced that there are no characters so desperate, and no habits of vice so inveterate, which may not be expected to yield to judicious, gentle, firm, and persevering kindness. Mrs Fry's unwearied labours continued, and the reformation of Newgate advanced. But this brought upon her an extensive correspondence, and much additional labour of other kinds, for she had now become a female heroine, whose fame had gone out into all the earth: it had penetrated mansions, palaces, and the courts of justice; and drew attention, not only to herself, but what was still more important, to the subject of prison reform. Her visits were now extended, not only to almost every part of the country, but also to the Channel Islands. After this, she crossed the Atlantic, and visited America, returning home through France. Scarcely was she quietly and safely at home, before another journey was undertaken to the continent, when she traversed Germany, Holland, and Denmark. Thus did this

wonderful woman ever go about doing good. No distance, no difficulties, no labours, appalled her in her efforts to instruct ignorance, to reform vice, and to alleviate wretchedness. Advancing years chilled not her ardour, nor induced her to seek repose. In this noble career she continued till the Master whom she so much loved, and so well served, called her to her rest and her reward. Such was the woman, who in her last illness made this declaration to her daughter, "I can say one thing, since my heart was turned to the Lord at the age of seventeen, I believe I have never wakened from sleep, in sickness or in health, by day or by night, without my first waking thoughts being, How shall I best serve my Lord?"

Perhaps it will be thought by many that Mrs Fry's example, though so beautiful, is, like Lady Huntingdon's, too lofty to be approached and imitated, however it may be contemplated and admired, by the readers of this volume. I therefore now exhibit one, altogether worthy to follow Mrs Fry's, to which no such remark will apply. Sarah Martin, of Great Yarmouth, was brought up to the business of a dressmaker, and followed this vocation in her native town. Her mind was brought under the saving influence of religion at the age of nineteen. Like most others whose conversion to God is real, she no sooner experienced the blessedness of true religion, than she longed to diffuse it. The first impulse of her zeal was a strong desire to visit the workhouse, and read and pray with its inmates. God, who inspires such wishes, will always make way for their gratification; and it was her felicity not only to gain admission to the house, but to receive a hearty

welcome, and a patient attention from its inmates. In the same year, when passing the jail, she felt a strong inclination to be admitted within its gloomy walls and cells, to read the Scriptures to the prisoners. She kept her wishes a secret, lest her friends should interfere, and hinder her in this work of mercy. God led her, and she consulted none but him. Difficulties presented themselves, but they soon vanished before the power of faith, prayer, and perseverance. The governor, aware of her consistent piety and benevolent character, indulged her in her generous plan of benefiting his guilty charge. Her frequent visits soon became habitual ones. Finding, on one occasion, a female convict, who was soon about to be transported, making a bonnet on the Sabbath, she immediately obtained permission to set up regular Sunday service, which till then had been neglected; and which from that time was conducted by herself.

To carry out her schemes for the improvement of the prisoners, she now sacrificed one day's profitable labour to give it to them. A pious lady, aware of this generous sacrifice, bought of her another day's labour for the jail, by allowing her what she usually received for her day's work. Books were wanting for the instruction of the women, and to obtain these she raised a quarterly subscription among a few friends. In connexion with these visits to the jail, she carried on during an hour or two of the day, the instruction of a few boys and girls, and kept up also her unabated attention to the paupers in the workhouse. As the close sick rooms of that asylum of poverty materially injured her health, she was compelled to relinquish that sphere of benevo-

lence, and take up, in lieu of it, a workhouse school. At length, her whole time was redeemed from making ladies' dresses, and given to the blessed work of instructing and reforming the victims of sin and of justice; for, it may be supposed, her business would naturally and necessarily decline in consequence of her irregular attention to it. Her support failed with her business, except what she derived from the interest of between two or three hundred pounds. But with strong and unpresumptuous faith, she exclaimed, "The Lord will provide." And so he did. She had become, by this time, quite unintentionally, a public character. The corporation knew, approved, and sanctioned her labours; and did more than this, for they voted her an allowance from the public funds. Her delicate and generous mind was wounded by the offer, and for awhile she pertinaciously refused it, till it was literally forced upon her, by her acceptance of it being made the condition of the continuance of her visits to the jail. This, of course, subdued all opposition. In this career she continued setting up one institution after another in the jail, for the benefit of its inmates; all tending to instruct their minds, to reform their morals, to promote their industry, to soften the rigour of their imprisonment, and to prepare them either for their return to society, or for their banishment into a land of exile. Nor did her solicitude leave them when they were discharged from prison, but followed them with its counsels and its vigilance into whatever situation she could trace them. It was her custom to compose addresses in the form of short sermons to be read to them at their Sunday worship, which did honour to her head and heart. A

few of these are printed at the end of her memoirs. So efficient were her services in the jail, that most honourable mention of them was made in the report presented to Parliament by the Inspector of Prisons. Her influence, which consisted of the meekness of wisdom, and the gentleness of love, was unbounded over her guilty and degraded pupils. Men, as well as women, hardened in crime, would, by their attention and kindness to her, yield the spectacle of the lion crouching at the feet of the lamb. In this way did this modest and unassuming young woman pursue her beneficial career, struggling all the while with a feeble frame, till, worn out with the efforts of her self-denying zeal, the operations of which were often carried on amidst vermin, filth, and vice, so abhorrent to her physical and moral sensibilities, she ceased from her labours, and entered that world, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. In prospect of her decease she composed a funeral sermon for herself, to be read to the prisoners after her death, and a touching and beautiful address it is.

The name of Sarah Martin will never cease to be mentioned with a tribute of esteem, as long as there are hearts to feel, or tongues to express, a high admiration for pure, disinterested, and self-denying benevolence.

Was not this earnestness?

Let these sketches of character be considered not merely as giving us information, but as furnishing examples, not merely to be admired, but imitated; not merely to lay down a rule, but to give an impulse. We see what others have done, and learn what we ought to

do. We may not have their ten talents, but we learn from them how to employ our five or one. Our opportunity may not be so extensive for doing good as theirs, but our desire may be as ardent. The grace that moved them can move us. If we cannot be a Henry Thornton or Thomas Wilson, we may perhaps become a Thomas Cranfield or a Harlan Page: and if, my female readers, you cannot be a Lady Huntingdon, or a Mrs Fry, you may perhaps be a Sarah Martin. May we all, by God's grace, drink in an inspiration to do good from looking at these examples!

CHAPTER X.

MEANS OF INCREASING THE CHURCH'S EARNESTNESS.

This increased earnestness is a state of things which must not be left to come on of itself without any efforts of ours, or be carelessly thrown upon the sovereignty of God. If a farm, whose scanty produce scarcely repays its tillage, is known to be susceptible of greater fertility, how is that end to be attained? Not by leaving the ground to itself, or continuing the old system of husbandry, or waiting for more auspicious seasons: there must be better farming, and a more diligent farmer. He who would double his crops, must double his labour. "Up, and be doing," is the voice of both reason and revelation. I would raise, if I could, through the length and breadth of the land, the stimulating cry, "Something more must be done." I do not mean to say nothing is being done. No. Blessed be God, not only something, but much is being done. I would have the church start in a new career of earnestness, with a devout, joyful, and grateful admission of what is doing. It is easier to keep up motion than to originate it: and it is easier to keep in action those who have risen up from their slumber, and are already moving, than to excite others who are reposing on the couch of idleness. It is both untrue and disheartening

to affirm that there is no life, no motion, no activity, in the church. In some things there never was more. "Whereunto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule." All good things tend to better things. Past success encourages the hope of achievements yet to be made. Despondency paralyses exertion; and the shadows of present fears darken the path of the future, and frighten us back when we would advance. Still we are not what we ought to be, what we might be, what we must be.

I. As every thing that is done by human instrumentality is the result of reflection, increased earnestness can only arise from increased thoughtfulness; and I therefore now suggest certain topics connected with this subject, for the deep meditation of professing Christians.

1. Has the church of God ever yet developed fully the divine idea of its own nature, and transcendent excellence and importance, as set forth in the New Testament? Let any one study this holy community as it is there described, and then say whether the sublime theory has ever yet been so entirely worked out as it might have been, and should have been? Whether the unity, the sanctity, the love, the zeal, the heavenliness of this "pattern given in the mount," have been embodied with sufficient and attainable approach to perfection, in the Christian profession? Whether the true idea of "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," a body of redeemed and sanctified men, a band of witnesses for God, has not been sunk amidst forms of government, ceremonial observances, and mere nominal Christianity? If we cannot find in all its grandeur this conception of the

infinite Intellect in the pages of the ecclesiastical history of past ages, can we find it now? Will any one on looking upon the schisms which divide, the corruptions which have disfigured, and still do disfigure, and the worldliness which enervates, the church, affirm that this is according to the archetype in the Word of God? Is it not, then, high time we should begin to think, and think earnestly, of conforming the church more exactly to its divine model? Have we not all been too much in the habit of considering the church as symbolized by systems of ecclesiastical polity and denominational distinctions and designations, rather than as consisting of those who repent, believe, love God, and lead a holy life? Have we not practically mistaken the whole matter, and lost the essential in the circumstantial, the vital in the formal?

2. A second subject of most serious consideration connected with the means of increased earnestness, is, whether really the church of God has yet so fully answered as it might, and should have done, the divine purpose for which it was set up; which is, to bear witness of the truth to the nations, and to convert them to God. If it has, how shall we account for it that in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, five-sixths of the population of the globe are Pagans or Mahommedans; that Christendom itself is covered with such hideous corruptions of the gospel; and that even the more spiritual professors of it are so deeply sunk in worldliness? Surely it is time to ask, how it is that with such a divine constitution in the world, and set up for such a purpose, its design has not been more fully realized?

3. Has the church ever yet thoroughly under-

stood and seriously revolved its design, and the wondrous power with which it is, or might be invested, for the accomplishment of this end? The most devoted Romanist that ever lived, who has sacrificed everything for "the church," is right, quite right in his idea of the importance of the church, and is wrong only in applying that designation to his communion. The church, viewed in all its relations, is God's grandest, noblest idea, and when fully developed will reveal more of God than all the universe besides. Have we, in dwelling upon our connection with the church, felt as if we we were lifted up by that relationship, into an elevation of surprising height, grandeur, and importance; and as if therefore, the business of our existence were to answer the purpose of our church fellowship? And then, have we studied, and studied deeply, the wondrous spiritual power there would be in the church, if it were in such a state as it might and should be? Suppose it were indeed "the tabernacle of God with man, "having the glory of God" and "filled with all the fulness of God;" what a moral power would it not contain, and must it not exert! Suppose all its ministers were full of knowledge, piety, and zeal, living only for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers, each in his place a burning and a shining light: suppose all its lay officers were like the first deacons, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and given up to the welfare of the divine community of believers upon earth: suppose all the corruptions that distort the form of Christianity and its doctrines, were done away, and the whole professing church were entirely the pillar and ground of the truth: suppose all the members of the church were consistent

in their conduct; full of holy unction in their souls; all self-dedicated, each with his one, five, or ten talents, whether of knowledge, wealth, or influence, and all united and harmonious: suppose, I say, this were the state of the church, what wondrous moral power it would contain, and how soon then would its design be accomplished in the conversion of the world! Just in proportion as this is its state now, is its power already. Yes, low as it is compared with this representation, it has a weight and an influence now, which nothing else wields. It is already, to a considerable extent, swaying silently the world's destinies: and what would be its power if it were brought up to its proper standard!

Such are some of the topics which must become the subjects of reflection with the people of God, if there be any hope of increased earnestness in religion. The mind must be occupied by these momentous subjects. Something higher and nobler than matters of business, politics, science, fashion, or even of church polity, must possess their hearts. The world must be less, and the church more, in their esteem. It is only on the broad deep basis of such reflections that we can raise a sound and enduring superstructure of more intense piety. The church, the true church, the church in its scriptural meaning, in its spiritual nature, as it is viewed by God, and not as it is considered by ecclesiastics, statesmen, or historians, must become a matter of intense thoughtfulness, solicitude, conversation, and discussion, by professing Christians. Here we must begin, if we would have it what it should be, and what God intended it to be.

II. Let the increased earnestness of the church be the subject of devout, serious, and general conversation.

It must not be dismissed in a spirit either of levity, or of self-complacency. It will not do sneeringly to say, "Leave the subject to the gloomy croakers and the self-conceited reformers; the church is in a very good state, and need not be disturbed by a set of evangelical pharisees." Those who speak thus cannot surely have read the New Testament with attention and seriousness, nor have compared with its requirements the state of their own hearts, or that of the Christian church at large. Are we, then, so holy, heavenly, and devout, so dead to the world, and so devoted to Christ and his cause, as to need no advance? So thought not Paul, when, in reference to his own personal experience, he would forget the things that were behind, and reach forth unto those that were before. A spirit of self-satisfaction and complacency, a resting in things as they are, a good-enough state of mind, will, if we cherish it, be our bane. We shall never be in earnest at all if we think we are in earnest enough. The very word earnestness implies an intense desire after what we have not at all possessed, or after more of what we already possess. Instead, therefore, of self complacency and satisfaction, let each member of every church begin to think seriously and devoutly upon the importance and necessity of improvement and growth. Let each speak of it to his fellow Christian, and raise a general reference to the matter. Let it be the talk of the church, the theme of the day. When it is uppermost in our hearts, it will be sure to be the topic of our conversation in company. When instead of being contented with our state, we begin to say, "We must have more life, more vigour, more action, in our piety;" then we shall have it. Especially let us resist the efforts of those who, not wishing

to be stimulated themselves, will endeavour to persuade us that things are well enough already, and should be let alone. There never will, never can be more earnestness, till a felt need of it pervade the Christian church, till it has seized and possessed the public mind, and has become the topic of general discourse.

III. It is of immense importance that this subject should be brought frequently and urgently before the churches, by the ministrations of the pulpit. The strain of preaching should be of a character that tends to foster this spirit. What is the design of ministerial and pastoral duties, if not to accomplish this end? Every minister should often ask himself a few such questions as the following: "What is genuine earnestness of personal religion? What kind of ministry is adapted to promote it? Is mine such a ministry?" Without a thorough understanding of all these topics, no man can hope to accomplish the end of his office, and promote around him a spirit of intense and consistent religion? If ministerial notions of religion are loose, and extend no further than to outward and conventional decorum; if ministers are strangers themselves to any great power of the divine life, and see no great need of it in others; if they set down as enthusiasm, or as religious cant, the influence of religion upon the heart and a high-toned spirituality; if they are lukewarm in their affections, worldly in their tastes and habits, and lax in their theology; then, nothing can be expected from their sermons in the pulpit, or their conversation in the parlour, that is likely to increase the earnestness of their churches. Their ministration will inevitably partake of the character of their own personal religion. They will not express, much less inculcate, a fervour they do

not feel. It becomes them to take care that there does not spring up among the pastors of the evangelical dissenting churches, a class answering to the Moderates of the Church of Scotland, and the anti-evangelical clergy of the Church of England: men, whose hearts are uninfluenced by the truth as it is in Jesus, and about whom that very truth itself hangs but loosely; whose sermons are dry discussions of mere ethical subjects; whose demeanour may be marked by official decorum, but whose character, conduct, and ministrations, are devoid of that evangelical sentiment, spirituality, unction, and fervour, which alone can promote similar views and feelings among the people. Every thing, under God, depends upon the ministry: earnest churches cannot be expected but from earnest preachers. But it is unnecessary to enlarge here upon a topic which I have made the subject of a previous volume, and I will therefore make only this one remark, that unless the pulpit be made to bear with all its power on this very point, there is little hope of any increase in the earnestness of the churches. The whole combined influence of the preachers of God's glorious gospel is indispensable. The standard of personal godliness must be lifted up, and lifted high, too. The nature of sanctification, as well as regeneration, must be explained, and its necessity insisted upon, the life of God in the soul enforced, the separation of the people of God from the people of the world enjoined, and a habit of self-denial and mortification inculcated. There must be no sewing pillows under the arms of sleepy professors, no spirit of accommodation to the requirements of worldly-minded Christians, no prophesying of smooth things, no healing the hurt of the daughter of Zion slightly, no

crying peace, peace, to them that are at ease in Zion. On the contrary, the defects and sins of professors must be pointed out, rebuked, and denounced: their judgments must be informed of the nature of true godliness, their consciences awakened, and their resolution of amendment engaged. For this purpose the most unsparing fidelity, combined with the greatest affection, must be used, every energy roused, and the whole course of the ministry directed so as to bring up the piety of the churches to the standard of God's Holy Word. And all this must at the same time be entered into and approved of by the people. Instead of being offended by the plainness of the minister, they must admire his courage and applaud his fidelity: instead of resenting his affectionate solicitude to aid them in the crucifixion of besetting sins, and to draw them out of the entanglements of the world, they should feel grateful for such self-denying offices of his generous friendship: instead of quarrelling with him for his puritanic notions and unnecessary strictness, they ought to hold up his hands, in holding up the law of God as the divine mirror by which they are to examine and adjust themselves.

IV. If the church be ever stirred up to greater earnestness, it must be by the greater earnestness of its individual members. I have already had frequent occasion in this work to remark that there is a fatal propensity in the members of all communities, to get rid of individual responsibility, and by a fiction to think of the body only as responsible. There is in reality no such thing as a collective conscience: bodies, as such, cannot be accountable. God will not, at the last judgment, deal with nations, or churches, or families. It

was a fine purpose of a young Christian which he thus entered in his diary, "Resolved, that I will, the Lord being my helper, think, speak, and act, as an individual: for as such I must live, as such I must die, stand before God, and be damned or saved for ever and ever. I have been waiting for others: I must act as if I were the only one to act, and wait no longer." This is just the view and the purpose to be taken by us all. It is as individuals we must act for ourselves, and he who acts for himself, in this matter, will certainly influence others. Every man acts upon some other man. Example is influence. The diffusion of religion is like the kindling of a fire, or the lighting of so many tapers; one original flame may by contact communicate itself to a multitude of other points. It was said of Harlan Page, by one who knew him intimately,

"I have well considered the assertion when I say, that during nine years in which we were associated in labours, I do not know that I ever passed an interview with him long enough to have any interchange of thought and feeling, in which I did not receive from him an impulse heavenward, an impulse onward in duty to God and the souls of men."

If this could be said of all professing Christians, we should see earnestness in reality.

Allow me then formally and solemnly to propose, that each reader of this volume, will seriously and immediately begin to be more in earnest for himself. Let him indulge in some such reflections as these, "If the church is ever made more earnest, it must be by an increased earnestness in its individual members. I am one of those members, and am as much bound to advance in the divine life as any other. It is but hypocrisy, gross, disgusting hypocrisy, to lament over the low state of religion in the church, and to desire a

revival, while I am unconcerned about the state of my own religion, and do not seek a revival of that. I will begin with myself. I will wait for no other. I must be more in earnest, and God helping me, I will be." We may now just notice the steps which such a person ought to take to accomplish his resolution.

Let him turn away from all the conventional piety of the day, and read over with devout attention what is said in a former chapter, of the true nature of genuine piety.

Let him, in a season of closet devotion, examine his own piety, and compare it with this standard.

Let him, upon discovering his great and numerous shortcomings, humble and abase himself before God, in a spirit of true contrition.

Let him reject all excuses which his own deceitful heart, and lukewarm, worldly-minded Christians will be ever ready to suggest for self-defence, and be thoroughly convinced that nothing can, or will, be admitted by God as an apology for a low state of personal religion.

Let him intensely desire to be raised from his depressed condition into a more exalted state of spirituality, heavenly-mindedness, and devoted zeal.

Let him set himself most vigorously to the work of mortifying sin, and crucifying the flesh.

Let him redouble his diligence in attending the means of grace, and especially let him give himself to reading the Scriptures, meditation, and prayer.

Let him add season to season of special humiliation and supplication, to obtain a new and copious effusion of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let him cultivate a new and more delicate sensibility

of conscience, in reference to all matters of offence, both towards God and man.

Let him seek to have his mind illuminated by the Spirit and Word of God, in the knowledge of the person, offices, and work, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let him give himself to Christian viligance, watching ever against sin.

Let him, in short, intelligently, resolutely, and unalterably, make up his mind to enter upon a new course of personal godliness; so new that his past attainments shall seem as if they were nothing. There is such a thing as starting afresh, as forgetting the things that are behind; and so must it be with him who would be really in earnest. He will wake up from his slumbering, dreamy profession, saying, "I have slept too long and too much, I must now throw off the spirit of sloth, and give all diligence to make my calling and election sure."

V. There must be an increased and pervading spirit of believing and importunate prayer, especially for the outpouring of the Spirit of God. If it is saying too much to affirm that the earnestness of religion is identical with the earnestness of prayer, because this would seem to imply that prayer is the whole of religion; it is not too much to say, that earnestness in religion is ever characterised by earnestness in prayer, and that there is really no more of the former than there is of the latter. It is absolutely impossible, in the nature of things, that either an individual, a church, or an age, can be earnest in piety, and at the same time lukewarm in devotion. The church needs the spirit of prayer, for its own internal state and for its external operations; for its own spiritual life, and for its

influence upon the world; for its more perfect sanctification, and for its more extensive usefulness.

Let it be borne in recollection that religion is a divine creation, a heavenly production; there is not a particle of it in our world, but what comes down from above; no, not a ray of holy light, or a glow of spiritual warmth, but what is an emission from the fountain of celestial radiance and fire. All on earth will be sterility and desolation till the shower descends from the clouds which hang around the throne of God. The world can no more be regenerated and sanctified without the work of the Holy Spirit, than it can be redeemed without the blood of the Son of God. The soul that is not visited by these genial influences of the new heavens, will be a desert soul; without these the church will be a desert church; the world, a desert world. We cannot be too deeply convinced of the need of the Spirit's operation; a defect of conviction on this point is radical, and will enervate everything, and cause ultimate and universal disappointment. Deny or forget, or only coldly and theoretically admit this, and whatever forms of individual devotion, and creeds of orthodoxy, we may maintain, whatever systems of ecclesiastical polity we may set up, whatever societies of confederated zeal we may organize, we are only building a Babel to proclaim our folly, or a mausoleum to entomb our religion. This great truth must not go down even in the shadow of the cross. While we contend for the free agency, and therefore the responsibility of man, and press them home upon the conscience, still we must recollect that the sinner never will do, what in one sense he can do, till he is made willing in the day of God's power. All hope of, and all attempt at revival, either in our own

soul, or in our own church, or in our own age, must begin here. This is to begin at the beginning.

"O Christians, is there such a doctrine in our creed as the doctrine of Divine influence? Is there such an Agent in the church as the almighty Spirit of God? Is he amongst us expressly to testify of Christ, to be the great animating spirit of his missionary witness, the church; and is it true that his unlimited aid can be obtained by prayer, that we can be baptised with the Holy Ghost, and with fire? O, ye that preach, 'believe the promise of the Spirit, and be saved.' Ye that love the Lord, keep not silence; send up a loud, long, united, and unsparing entreaty for his promised aid. This, this is what we want. And this is all we want. Till this be obtained, all the angelic agency of heaven will avail us nothing; and when it is obtained, all that agency will be unequal to the celebration of our triumphs."*

Let this impressive and beautiful paragraph be written upon our hearts, repeated by our lips, and sounded by ten thousand echoes throughout the land. This must be the burden of the church's prayers, for God has, to a considerable extent, made the outpouring of the Spirit dependent upon the supplications of his people; an arrangement by which he honours himself in being publicly acknowledged as the Author of all good, and at the same time honours his church by making her the medium through which the blessing descends. What a tremendous responsibility, then, does this devolve upon the church! If it depended upon our prayers whether the sun should rise, or the rain should descend upon the inhabitants of the other hemisphere, should we not if we neglected prayer, be chargeable with the perpetual night and desolating drought which caused the countless millions to perish for lack of the light of day and the fertilising shower? Had we any bowels of compassion, should we in that case ever look up at the orb of day, or the floating cisterns

* "The Witnessing Church."

in the clouds of heaven, without imploring the God of nature to send their inestimable treasures to the benighted and starving inhabitants of other regions? Christians, the moral world is in darkness and in drought for want of your prayers; sin reigns, Satan triumphs, hell is peopled, through the want of your prayers; the dominion of Christ, the spread of truth, the millennial glory, are hindered through the want of your prayers; your missionary societies and all your organizations of pious zeal; your abounding liberality and active exertions are but very partially successful, through the want of your prayers. Think of this and tremble at your responsibility, and tremble still more at your insensibility. Yes, what we want is more prayer. I know we want money, we want men, but we want prayer still more. More prayer will give us more of everything else that is necessary. Hear the testimony of your missionaries sent to us from the midst of their difficulties among the heathen, "Brethren, pray for us;" transmitted to us from their sick and dying beds, "Brethren, pray for us;" delivered to us when wasted and worn they come back to England, to recruit their enfeebled strength, "Brethren, pray for us;" this, this, is the emphatic supplication from every missionary station under heaven, and borne to us by every breeze and every wave that touches our shore, "Brethren, pray for us." Could all the missionaries of all societies, and from all the stations upon earth, assemble in one place, however they may differ on some points of doctrine and discipline, they would be perfectly harmonious in bearing this testimony, that prayer is the hope of the missionary cause.

We were never more in danger of forgetting the

importance and necessity of prayer that at the present moment. Our institutions have risen to a magnitude and extension which are grand and imposing; it is an age of great societies, an era of organization, when there is imminent peril of trusting to the wisdom of committees, and the power of eloquence, of numbers, and of money, instead of the power of prayer. We cannot, I know, do without organization, and it makes one's heart throb with delight to see to what an extent it is carried. The annual list which is published of our May meetings is one of the greatest wonders of the age, the brightest glories of the church, and the richest hopes of posterity. That one document appears to my eye as the ruby-tinted clouds of the orient sky, which announce the approach of the millennial orb. But then our glory is our danger; this very organization may seduce us, and I am afraid is seducing us, and has seduced us from our dependance upon God, till organization is likely to become the image of jealousy, which maketh jealous in the temple of the Lord.

An eloquent speaker once said upon a missionary platform, "Money, money, money, is the life's blood of the missionary cause." I would substitute another word, and say "Prayer, prayer, prayer, is the life's blood of the missionary cause." I am no enthusiast: I do not expect our cause to be sustained without money; nor do I expect gold to be rained out of heaven into our coffers. Money we must have, in far greater abundance than we now have it, and money will come at the bidding of prayer. If we had more fervent believing supplication, we should have more wealth. The same spirit of sincere and importunate supplication which would bring down the treasures of

heavenly grace, would call forth the supplies of earthly means. I repeat what I think I have said elsewhere that I could be almost content that for the next year, not a word would be said about money, but the church be summoned universally to intense and believing supplication. Ministers of the gospel, lay this matter upon the consciences of your flocks; instruct them in their duty, and urge them to it. Remind them that what we need is not only a giving church, and a working church, but a praying church. Tell them that praying for the coming down of the Spirit is not to be confined to the Sabbath and the pulpit, nor to the missionary and social prayer meeting, but that it is every man's business at his own family altar, and in his closet. Then, when the whole church of God, with all its families apart, and every individual member apart, shall be engaged in a spirit of believing and fervent supplication; then may it be expected the Spirit of God will come down in power and glory upon the earth, and not till then, whatever of organization, of wealth, of eloquence, or of numbers, may be engaged in the cause of Christian missions. Activity and devotion, giving and praying, conscientious zeal, and the feeling of entire dependance upon God, must be nicely balanced in all we do. The more we give, the more we should pray; and the more we pray, the more we should give. The proportions are often disturbed; our danger in this day lies in an excess of activity over the spirit of prayer. Let us restore the balance, and bring on an era which shall be characterised as the praying age of the missionary enterprise.

Our supplications should be the prayers of faith. We ought to know and to feel that the cause of missions is no mere experiment in the spiritual world, no

invention of man, no tentative scheme; but an attempt the success of which is guaranteed by all the attributes of the eternal God, and which should therefore be prayed for in the full confidence of assured expectation. And to faith, we must add fervour; we must pray for the regeneration of the world with an intelligent perception of what is included in that wondrous phrase, "a world converted from idolatry to Christ," with a recollection that this is in some sense dependent upon our prayers, and with such an importunity as we might be supposed to employ if the world's salvation depended upon our individual intercession.

But this spirit of prayer is needed by the church, not only to give power and efficiency to her operations for the conversion of sinners, but for her own internal improvement; to increase, and indeed to indicate her earnestness for her own salvation. She needs an outpouring of the Spirit upon herself to rouse her from her lukewarmness, and to elevate her to a higher state of purity, fervour, and consistency. She needs revival, and it can be looked for only in answer to the fervent prayer of faith, and in answer to such prayers it may be ever and everywhere expected. To say nothing of other instances well known, and some of them alluded to in this work, I may refer to the success of that flaming seraph, Mr McCheyne, of the Free Church of Scotland, whose early death in the midst of his usefulness, is one of the mysteries of Providence "too deep to sound with mortal lines." He thus records in his diary the spirit of prayer which prevailed among his people: "Many prayer-meetings were formed, some of which were strictly private; and others, conducted by persons of some Christian experience, were open to

persons under concern, at one another's houses. At the time of my returning from the mission to the Jews, I found thirty-nine such meetings, held weekly, in connexion with the congregation." O that this beautiful instance of co-operation with the minister, by the people, prevailed through all our churches. Look at it, professing Christians; ponder it, church members. The whole church, or at any rate, its more experienced members, resolving themselves into thirty-nine prayer associations, meeting weekly, fostering new converts, and all this in the absence of the pastor. When shall this pattern be imitated? When shall all our deacons and leading members, go and do likewise? When shall our churches be made up of praying members, and be full of the spirit of prayer after this fashion? This is the earnestness of a church, the earnestness of religion, the earnestness of prayer. Revivals will always come, where this is found. It is itself a revival.

If there be one thing which is more suited to our condition, and more prompted by our necessities than any other, it is prayer; if there be one duty which is more frequently enjoined by the precepts, or more beautifully enforced by the examples of Scripture, than any other, it is prayer; if there be one practice as to which the experience of all good men of every age, every country, and every church, has agreed, it is prayer; if there be one thing which above all others decisively marks the spirit of sincere and individual piety, it is prayer: so that it may be safely affirmed, where the spirit of prayer is low in the soul of an individual, in a country, an age, or a church, whatever it may have, of morality, of ceremony, of liberality, the spirit of religion is low also.

Now it is most seriously to be apprehended, that

this deficiency of prayer is the characteristic of our age. It is a preaching age, a speaking age, a hearing age, but not eminently a praying one. Men are too busy to pray. Even the most distinguished Christians are too apt to shorten the seasons of prayer, in order to lengthen those of secular and sacred business. Every thing, not only in the world, but in the church, is against the spirit of prayer. I know very well we cannot expect in such an age as ours, the same spirit of devotion as prevailed in persecuting times, when John Welsh, one of the men of the Covenant, spent whole days praying in the church of Ayr for his parishioners, wrestling alone with God; he used to lay his plaid by his bedside, and to rise often in the middle of the night, wrap himself in his garment, pour out his soul to his Maker, and say, "I wonder how a Christian can lie in bed all night, and not rise to pray." We do not expect even the most holy ministers to spend eight hours a day in prayer, as he did, who had little to do but to suffer, and to pray: but surely we may expect more of the spirit of prayer than we now witness, either in pastors, or their flocks.

There is one view of prayer which has not been so much considered as it should be; and that is its reflex power, or in other words, the moral influence of prayer upon the individual mind engaged in it. No doubt it is an expressive homage paid to God, and an appointed means of obtaining blessings from above, but it is more, for it is also ordained for self-edification. The offspring of our desires, it re-acts upon its source, making them more strong, more vivid, more solemn, more prolonged, and more definite as to their objects; the effort of expressing them to God, concentrates the soul in

them, and upon their objects. Every sincere act of adoration increases our veneration for the divine character, every confession of sin deepens our penitence, every petition for a favour cherishes a sense of dependence, every intercession for others expands our philanthropy, and every acknowledgment of a mercy inflames our gratitude. Every good man is therefore the better for his own prayers, which not only obtain other good things, but are themselves good to him. Hence when an individual can be stirred up to pray more for increased earnestness of religion, his supplication contains both the prayer and its answer, and affords a literal fulfilment of the promise, "before they call I will answer." Thus a good man never entirely loses his prayers, for if they do no good and bring no blessing to others, they do to himself. Whenever the church, therefore, is stirred up to a more intense spirit of prayer for a revival, the revival is begun.

But the benefit does not stop here, for God will answer such supplications, and bestow the gift which is sought. God is ever waiting to be gracious. His language ever is, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The promises to this effect are so numerous, and so express, that it would seem as if the church might enjoy any measure of divine power which she had the piety to desire, the faith to ask, and the will to receive. She is invited to launch forth into all the fulness of God, and to replenish herself with the inexhaustible riches of divine grace.

The best way to ascertain how far the spirit of prayer

is wanting, or is possessed, in this day, is, for each reader of this volume to ask how it is with himself. He best knows himself, and his own practice, and he may therefore say, "Suppose my case is not a singular, but an average one, as there is reason to suppose it is, what is the state of the Christian church?" And what will that individual find to be the case with himself? How much time in each day does he devote to this most incumbent, most momentous duty, to pray for his conduct in life, for his salvation, his family, his church, the world? How much, as compared with other things; with his relaxation from business, his recreation, the time he gives to the newspaper, or even to absolute vacuity? Is there not a frequent reluctance to the duty? Is it not often performed rather from a haunting sense of duty, and to silence the accusations of conscience, than from any attraction, sweet and irresistible, coming over the heart from the throne of grace? Is there not a habit of letting any inferior thing that may offer itself be attended to before it, and a disposition to postpone the exercise to a more convenient time, and a more appropriate frame of mind? Is there no habit of "making social or domestic prayer a partial excuse for omitting the private exercise, a kind of acquittance, the share of a social exercise being reckoned enough for the whole tribute of an individual, as if a social tribute were for the purpose of gaining an exemption for each individual?" Now, how much prayer, such as really deserves the name, is going up to heaven continually from the church, and for it? Surely, surely, we need far more, and must have far more, if the Spirit shall come down in plenitude and power to make us more earnest in religion.

VI. Special seasons of devotion, instituted with immediate reference to the revival and increase of religion, are adapted to promote this object, and are therefore of considerable importance. This is perhaps one of the most difficult practical subjects of the present volume, and will require the greatest caution in treating it. A prejudice founded partly on observation, and partly upon report, but rarely upon experience, against any efforts beyond the ordinary course of ministerial and pastoral labour, exists in many minds: and if some instances of revival-efforts were made the example or the standard of what is here meant by special services, they are to be dreaded and deprecated by every lover of sobriety of mind, and every friend to the credit of our holy religion. Scenes more resembling Bedlam than the solemnities of the house of God, have been set forth under the name of "revival meetings," to the disgust of the wise, the grief of the good, and the scandal of the bad. Nor is it any justification of such frantic orgies, to allege that souls have been converted. Very likely. But how many have imbibed invincible prejudice against all religion, how many more after the excitement has passed off, have become increasingly hardened, and how many have received a distaste for the ordinary and more sober ministrations of the gospel! There is, no doubt, a power in the eternal truths of the Word of God, that will exert itself, under God's Spirit, in defiance of all the revolting and inharmonious adjuncts with which they may be sometimes associated. It is not, perhaps, to be questioned that if some of the monstrosities of the Church of Rome, such, for instance, as dramatic exhibitions of the Saviour's passion, were united by some popular and energetic preacher of the

gospel with a vivid appeal to the conscience, in the statement of evangelical truths, souls might be converted from the error of their ways; but would this authorize and justify us in representing the scenes of Calvary upon a stage? I eschew then, at once and for ever, all attempts at revivals which offend against the majesty and sobriety of divine truth, which violate the proprieties of public worship, produce an excitement of the passions that amounts to mental intoxication, and render tame, tasteless, and insipid, the ordinary ministrations of the sanctuary. But is there no middle course between wild extravagance and dull formality? Between the performances of the actor, and the somnolence of the sluggard? Is a judicious physician to be precluded from adopting a stimulating treatment in the case of a collapsed patient, because some ignorant quacks have carried it so far as to bring on epilepsy or madness? I know it is the opinion of many, that all attempts to keep up, or to increase, the spirit of vital godliness in the church, and multiply conversions, by special meetings, tend to relax, on the part of both ministers and their flocks, diligence in the maintenance of their stated services; and to teach them to rely on occasional and spasmodic exertions, rather than on such as are habitual. Our object, they say, should be to produce a constant and well-sustained earnestness, rather than a fitful and transient one; just as in regard to our bodies, our aim is habitually to keep up robust health, rather than to neglect it, and then trust to occasional and extraordinary means for restoring it. This is true. But surely if in the latter case, it be well to resort to special means of cure, when the health is impaired, and the strength is reduced, and in the best constitutions

this will sometimes take place, it must be equally proper, so far as the analogy holds good, to follow this rule in reference to religion. In the best and the most watchful Christians, piety, alas, will occasionally decline; first love will abate: and vital godliness be among "the things that remain, and that are ready to die." Who does not feel this, and lament it too? Have not all in whose soul is the life of God, and who are anxious to maintain that life in vigour, found it necessary occasionally to observe special seasons of examination, humiliation, and prayer? Does not the biography of every eminently good man give us an account of the days of fasting and devotion, which he observed to obtain a revival of religion in his soul? Is there a Christian really in earnest for his salvation, one of more than usual piety, who does not feel it necessary to add an occasional season of devotion to his accustomed duties, in order to recover lost ground and to advance in the divine life? And does this practice take him off from his usual and regular duties of meditation and prayer? On the contrary, does it not rather lead him to supply his defects, to correct his negligences, and to pursue his course with fresh vigour and alacrity. Surely, if this be the case with the individual Christian, the same thing may be affirmed of a Christian church. By special services I do not mean fixed periodical ones, such as yearly fasts, or a regular annual repetition of continuous preachings; for such cease to be special, and become a part of the ordinary means, and are themselves liable to sink into the same dulness of routine, and deadness of formalism, as the more frequent and ordinary means. What I mean by special services are some such exercises as the

following. An occasional day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, by a religious denomination, to which all its churches shall be invited by the committee that manage its affairs, or which shall be determined upon by the churches themselves at a general gathering.

An occasional meeting for solemn prayer by the directors of our public institutions, when all business shall be excluded, and nothing else shall take place but invocation of the blessing of God upon their plans, their counsels, and their objects: that thus a devotional spirit may be infused into all their operations. It is true they generally commence every meeting with prayer, but who has not felt how perfunctorily this is often done?

How much would it tend to keep up a right feeling and a fervent spirit in the ministry, if the pastors within a district of twenty or thirty miles diameter, were occasionally to meet and spend a couple of days together in solemn prayer, unrestrained conference, and mutual exhortation! What solemn discourse, what deep utterances of the heart, what intercommunion of soul, might then take place! As it now is, we meet only for business, business, business, till we return to our homes, revived a little, perhaps, in body, for the journey, but not one whit better, sometimes even worse, in our spiritual state.

Single churches could by a voluntary resolution of their own, determine to keep occasionally a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. In the olden times of our forefathers, this was by no means uncommon; but alas, in our busy day we find little time, and have less inclination, for such exercises! True it might be difficult to command a week-day for such a purpose: what hinders, then, that a Sabbath should not some-

times be thus appropriated, and the services of that day be all made to bear on the object?

Where whole churches do not set apart such seasons, why may not a few of the members, who are likeminded in their devotional habits, in their yearning after a higher tone of spiritual feeling, and their longing for the outpouring of the Spirit, agree together to meet at particular times for special prayer? How blessed an invitation is it to issue from some spiritually-minded Christian to his fellows, "Come, let us set apart a season of special prayer for a revival of true piety in our church, in the denomination, and the whole church of God!"

But there is another kind of special services, which for the purpose of conversion, might be resorted to with great advantage, if conducted with propriety; I mean, continuous preaching, carried on for several successive days, and accompanied by earnest prayer on the part of the members of the church. As already intimated, this plan has been lamentably abused; not only by certain men, called "revivalist preachers," whose outrageous rant, "pious frauds," and solemn trickery, have done so much mischief, and have furnished the lukewarm with an apology for formalism, but by others, who have made such services a mere pretence to call attention to a partially deserted place, or to puff an unknown minister into notice, till one almost loathes the very name of "revival meetings." But how different from all this "bellows blowing," as Mr Jay called it, are the sober and solemn services which have been and still are carried on by some ministers, to call by special efforts the attention of the careless to the awful verities of eternal truth. When a minister per-

ceives that little good seems to result from his preaching, that souls are not converted, and that professors are lukewarm and worldly, is there any thing contrary to sobriety, to reason, to revelation, to the laws of propriety, or to the mental economy of man, in determining, by a continuous course of services, sustained through the evenings of a whole week, to keep religion before the minds of the people, and rouse their slumbering attention to its high importance? Is not this perfectly consonant with the strictest decorum, with the most refined spiritual sensibility? Shall science, politics, and literature, have their special services, and not religion? How likely to rouse the minds of the careless, to fix the thoughts of the volatile, to decide the choice of the wavering, and to kindle the ardour of the lukewarm, is the plan of thus carrying on a succession of appeals to them through a whole week. Keep out extravagance, let there be no anxious seat, no vociferation, no extravagant appeals to the passions; but only the vivid, solemn, and faithful exhibition of the truth. As one minister, the pastor, may not have strength enough for such services, another, or more than one, may be called on to assist him. During all this while, much prayer should ascend from the church for the divine blessing to come down upon such efforts. What can be objected to in such a scheme? Who has ever tried it without a blessed result? What, in fact, were the labours of Whitfield and Wesley, yea, what were the labours of apostles, but such continuous services as these? It is said of the blessed Paul, he "disputed," or as it signifies by a better translation, "discoursed," daily in the school of Tyrannus.

What are we doing by the ordinary means? What

souls are we converting to God by our regular routine? Does not the work of reconciliation languish in our hands? Are not thousands and tens of thousands perishing at our doors, and going down to the pit before our eyes? And shall we be contented with routine, formality, and custom, in our way of saving them? Shall we fear to step out of our ordinary course to pluck sinners as brands from the eternal burning? Shall we be afraid lest by adopting some new means, however little differing from the stated services of the sanctuary, we shall incur the charge of enthusiasm in our attempts to carry out the purposes for which the Son of God expired upon the cross? Enthusiasm? I wish we better deserved the charge, and were more entitled to the accusation. Enthusiasm! Where is the cause in our world that more deserves or demands it, in a modified and chastened meaning, than that of saving immortal souls from eternal perdition? Enthusiasm! Bid the man who is snatching his fellow-creatures from the flames, or from the wreck, not to be an enthusiast in his heroic generosity, and the admonition will be far more seasonable and appropriate than when addressed to him who steps a little out of the ordinary track to convert sinners from the error of their ways, save souls from death, and hide multitudes of sins. Enthusiasm! Make the charge, as upon the principles of many of our bigots to formalism we justly may, against that great man, who said, "If by any means I might save some, I could even wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." O, were that man again in our world, what would he think, and what would he say, of the fastidiousness of some of our ministers and churches,

as to stepping ever so little out of the ordinary way of conducting the services of religion? The world is perishing, the great masses of our population are sinking more and more under the power of infidelity and irreligion; and we stand by asking what can be done, and are afraid to try any new scheme of action for their salvation, however discreet or well adapted, lest we should discompose the dress, or ruffle the fringes, of our habits of ecclesiastical order! As if it were better that men should go down unobstructed to the pit, than that our formalism should be in the least disturbed for their salvation.

Some time since I wrote, for his opinion on this subject, to one whom God has honoured and blessed in his efforts, and who is one of the most devout and sober-minded of our brethren: he thus replied to my inquiries:

"I think that considering the state of the churches generally, there is a call for something of this kind. The ministers are unsettled, which they would not be if they were doing good. I am sorry to say also the churches are often dissatisfied with their ministers, an evil which would be obviated were more good accomplished. It appears to me that special efforts, if wisely conducted, would be productive of much benefit; first of all, to the ministers themselves, in teaching them to understand better the nature of the work in which they are engaged. They would be led to know more how to aim at the conversion of sinners in their preaching. Secondly, it would do much good to the churches in arousing them to a better conception of their calling and duty, and they would acquire more of the taste for seeing good done, which would render them discontented with the desolation around them, and constrain them to give themselves more to prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit. When a church has once witnessed a season of revival, it is much more likely to witness the same again and again, than one that knows nothing of it but by hearsay. Thirdly, the world around the church where the special effort is made will often receive an impression, the effects of which are visible for many years. Thoughts are first started in

the mind which are not for long after matured into conversion. This I look upon as the greatest of all the benefits derived from special efforts. A leaven is cast into the community, which makes the regular preacher of the gospel afterwards much more efficacious. I am sure this was the case at C ——, and I have reason to believe it has been the case at other places also."

This is the testimony of reason and experience, and cannot be gainsaid. Similar testimony is borne by all who have had the courage to institute such services, the fervour necessary for their efficiency, and the discretion requisite to conduct them with propriety.

VII. If we would have an increase of earnest religion, we must expect it, and look for it. There must be a frame of mind the opposite of despondency. We must not conclude that even in this age of worldliness, the thing is impossible. There is enough of truth in the promise, and of power in the Spirit of God, to accomplish this great achievement, and raise the church out of its comparatively low condition, into a much loftier elevation of piety and devotedness, if we have but faith to receive the blessing. This is what we want, a faith equal to the promise of God. If we could bring up our minds to the point of expectation, we should soon reach that of possession. We have not, because we ask not: and we ask not, because we expect not. Let us only intensely long, and earnestly pray, and diligently labour, and then we are warranted to expect. When did God ever excite expectation of this kind, and not fulfil it? There is everything to warrant expectation. God is able to help us, and give us any measure of grace we need. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. This has been the hope and triumph of the church in every age. He can open the heavens and pour down salvation. He can make the wilderness like Eden, and

the desert like the garden of the Lord. When we undertake anything for the revival of religion and the cause of the Redeemer, little as our encouragement may be from any other quarter, we cannot expect too much from God. We may take hope from the nature of the object we are pursuing. What is it we are looking for? Religion is God's own cause in our world. It is the only cause which is his in the fullest sense of the word. It is his highest and noblest production upon earth, that in which he has a deeper interest and on which his heart is more set than any other. In our attempts to promote an increase of religion, we may encourage expectation from the fact that God has ever blessed the attempts of others. When and where did one ever fail? No, the whole history of the church does not furnish a single instance of united, vigorous, humble, and believing prayer, labour, and expectation, being disappointed. Our own experience, limited as it is, sustains our hope. Did we ever yet put forth our energies, in fervent supplication and rigid mortification, and not find a perceptible advance in spiritual religion? Did we ever yet spend an extraordinary season of humiliation and prayer, without a consciousness of a more intense reality in our religion?

O Christians, throw off your despondency then: adopt the noble maxim of the immortal Carey; attempt great things, expect great things. Granting that there is much in the church that is delightful to contemplate, is it what it ought to be, what it might be? Abandon the idea that it never can be better. Reject the suggestion that it is as holy, spiritual, and heavenly-minded as it can ever expect to be in such an age and such a country as this: that it is so environed with influences

hostile to the spirit of piety, that it is as high in devotion as it can be expected to be, or need be. Do you say this of yourselves? Do you make these excuses for yourselves? Are you all you can be expected to be, or need be. Are you reconciled to a lukewarm state of devotion, a low state of piety, under the soporific, unworthy, unbelieving notion, that nothing better is to be expected, and that God looks for nothing better? If you are, your religion altogether is to be suspected. If not, then be not satisfied with the condition of the church. God has better things in store for us if we will but have them. Let us only be earnest in prayer, in faith, in labour, and in hope, and who can tell but the day of blessing is near? Already I seem to hear "the sound of abundance of rain." While bowing your knees, like the prophet, on the top of Carmel, some herald of mercy may tell you of "a little cloud that ariseth from the sea," which though now no bigger than a man's hand, may soon cover the heavens and pour down the refreshing shower.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MILLENNIAL STATE OF THE CHURCH.

In the foregoing pages we have glanced at the state of the Christian church from its commencement to the present time; and we have seen the imperfections and corruptions which, in its best condition, have hitherto weakened its strength, impaired its beauty, limited its extent, and hindered its usefulness. An interesting enquiry now presents itself, "Will it be always thus, till it is swallowed up of life, glory, and immortality? Is there no hope that it will arise from the earth, shake off the dust, put on its beautiful garments, and array itself as a bride adorned for her husband?" It were a melancholy thing both for herself and the world, if there were no such expectation. It were a painful thing to look down the vale of time, and see the same divisions, errors, worldliness, and feebleness, ever within the church; the same Paganism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, and Popery, around it; and no visions of better things advancing to supplant these scenes of the moral world. If what we have seen or read, is all that Christianity is to do for our race, if the world is never to be converted to Christ, nor the church to be brought into a nearer conformity to the New Testament, then would infidelity triumph, and exultingly affirm that the Son of God had not destroyed the works of the devil,

that the gospel had been partially, aye to a great extent, a failure, and therefore was a fable. But we have no apprehension that such a ground of triumph will ever be given to the enemies of our faith. A brighter era is destined to arrive, a golden age is to dawn upon us, when the predictions of prophets and the descriptions of apostles are all to be fulfilled, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

If, as some eminent commentators suppose, the last two chapters of the book of the Revelation are descriptive of some happy state of the church of Christ on earth, and not of its celestial state, what a scene opens through the vista of time to the eye of faith; what a landscape of surpassing glory for our dark, disordered world, expands upon the Christian, as from the mount of promise he surveys the promised land. What a state will the church attain to, when "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it: and the gates shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." Amidst what united joys of angels and of men will "the holy city, new Jerusalem, be seen coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." How welcome will be the great voice out of heaven, saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Yes, glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God, which, like Moses, we may now behold in the distance.

First of all, there is preservation. Hear, O Zion, the word of thy God, and rejoice for thy consolation: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment shalt thou condemn. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: He shall be a wall of fire round about thee, and the glory in the midst of thee." Yes, the church is safe, though nothing else is. Human systems of religion, of government, of philosophy, opposed to the principles of revelation, shall, like the billows against a rock, rolling successively against it, be themselves utterly dissolved. So it ever has been; so it ever will be; till the last foe shall be vanquished. Let infidelity utter its blasphemies, false philosophy its sophistries, and Popery its anathemas, we exultingly repeat, "The church is safe." Amidst the wreck of empires, and the subversion of thrones, she rises fresh in beauty and in might, with celestial glory beaming around her, and her enemies fleeing before her. Let no man's heart tremble for fear; no man's brow gather gloom; no man's tongue utter despondency. The celestial bark may be amidst the billows, while the tempest sweeps along the deep, but Jehovah Jesus is on board, and she cannot be lost unless the pilot perish. But we have nothing to fear. Jesus lives for evermore, and is Head over all things to his church. In its lowest state, he has never forsaken her, and he never will. His honour is identified with her final triumph. Every harp should therefore be snatched from the willows, new joys should be felt, and new anthems sung by all the assemblies of the saints: and amidst the convulsions of every age, be this the song of the universal church; "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help

in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof roar and be troubled: though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early."

But blessed as it is to know that immutable truth and omnipotent power guarantee the continuance of the church, this is the least and lowest of her hopes. Improvement in her spiritual condition is another thing which the church is authorised to expect. The earnestness now desired will be given to her. Even before she shall assume her celestial form, and be presented a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, her spots will not be so dark, nor her wrinkles so deep, nor her blemishes so obvious, as they now are. She will appear even upon earth invested with something of celestial radiance and beauty. It is impossible to study, even superficially, the New Testament, and the pages of ecclesiastical history, and not be entirely convinced that Christianity has never yet been fully developed upon earth, as it might be expected it would have been in the character and conduct of the church. There surely must be an age and a state of her history, when this shall be done, and when she shall not only be, but shall appear to be, cast in the very mould of the inspired volume; when the Sermon on the Mount, the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, shall not only be the law, but also the practice of Christians, and the Bible and the church shall exactly agree; when every professor of religion shall

be a living exhibition of faith, hope, love, in all their power and beauty; when, in short, the spiritual shall so far predominate over the carnal, the divine over the human, the heavenly over the earthly, and the eternal over the temporal, that the communion of the faithful shall appear like a bride adorned for her husband, and just adorned for the celebration of the nuptial ceremonies. Practical Christianity will not then appear as it now too often does, as a feeble exotic withering in an uncongenial clime, but as a plant of paradise, exhibiting something of its native beauty, and shedding, though not wasting, its fragrance even on this desert air. All the fruits of the Spirit will be seen in rich abundance and full maturity. The workmanship of the Holy Ghost will be manifested, not only in the outline of the renewed mind, but in all the minute and delicate touches of Christian character. The image of God will be impressed upon the outer and visible man, while the mind of Christ will fill the inner and hidden man of the heart. Such is to be the church of the latter day: when the winter shall pass off, and be followed by a scene which shall exhibit all the charms of the other seasons combined in one, the energies of spring, the glow of summer, and the luxuriance of autumn.

Union, love, and harmony, shall then characterise the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God. The prayer of the divine Redeemer that his people may be one, even as he and the Father are one, shall be answered; the exhortations of the apostle to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, shall be complied with; the object, so long lost, so ardently desired, so mistakenly sought after, shall be restored, and the divided church

become one again. The din of controversy shall cease with the din of arms; the peace that shall prevail in the world shall be but an emblem of the tranquillity which pervades the church; and the pen of the polemic shall be laid up in the museum of the antiquarian, with the sword of war. The spirit of division will be healed, not by legal restraints or angry controversy; nor will an angel descend to give a sanatory virtue to the troubled waters of strife; but this disease will be cured by a copious outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the hostile parties; by the diffusion of a larger degree of vital religion; by drawing men from human systems to the fountain of Scripture, there to purify their much abused vision from the scales of error and prejudice; by causing them not only to profess, but to feel, that love is the essence of Christianity, and all beside but "the earthly attire which she will throw off as she steps across the threshold of eternity, to enter the temple of God." Illustrious era! How many hearts, saddened by the divisions of the visible church, are sighing for thine advent, and how many sons of peace are lifting up their aspirations to Him that ordereth the times and the seasons, saying, "Come quickly!" Thine it is to heal the matricidal wounds inflicted by her own children on the peace of Zion. Thine, not only to repress the bitter words, and still more bitter feelings, and to expel the envies and the jealousies occasioned by the barriers of sectarian zeal, but to remove the very barriers themselves, and bring into one fold, under one shepherd, that precious flock of Christ, which, "during the dark and cloudy day that has come upon us, has been scattered upon the mountains and upon every high hill." Thine

it is to close the long reign of malice and hate, to which our earth has been subjected ever since the hour of the fall, and to give to it the nearest resemblance to heaven it ever can have below, in the universal dominion of love! Hasten, O Saviour, this thy brightest triumph. All creatures groan for thy coming, while thy church cries, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

But even this is not all that awaits the church on earth, for she is assured of increase, triumph, and universal dominion. She is not always to be shut up within her present narrow limits, a little band scorned by pride, oppressed by power; the circumference of the globe is to be the circle of her domain, and all nations are to be her subjects. The Lord shall arise upon thee, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted." "The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see and flow together, and thy heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." A thousand such promises as these, though partially fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son of God, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world, await their consummation in the latter day glory. Then shall God utterly abolish the idols of every land. "I have sworn by myself," He says, "the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return; that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Thus the oath of God is pledged to the sub-

version of every thing that opposeth itself to him. Paganism, that blood-stained, hydra-headed monster of impiety, cruelty, and lust, shall be slain to rise no more. Mohammedanism, that audacious lie, propagated by the scimitar, and kept up only by the means that established it in the earth, shall be exterminated; and the Koran be destroyed by the Bible, and the crescent disappear for ever in the blaze of the Sun of Righteousness. Then shall the vail fall from the heart of the Jew, the blindness which hath happened unto Israel be done away, and the outcasts of Judea, still beloved for their fathers' sake, shall "come in with the fulness of the Gentiles." The man of sin shall be cut off: the mighty angel shall take the mill stone, and dashing it into the sea, shall utter the shout, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen:" while the loud voice of much people shall reply, "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." The sabbath of our world shall have arrived. The worship of Jehovah shall be universal. The Name which is above every name shall be heard on every plain, and echoed from every mountain. The Bible shall be in every hand, a house of prayer in every village, and an altar for God in every habitation. The groans of creation shall be lost amidst the songs of salvation, and this vale of tears, even to its darkest nook and deepest recess, be irradiated with the sunshine of joy and praise. The throne of tyranny, cemented by blood, and occupied by oppression, shall be overturned,

and the vine and fir tree, overshadowing its seat, and yielding the fruit of liberty, shall be planted in its place. Slavery, that veriest type of selfishness, cruelty, and lawless power, shall be abolished as one of the greatest crimes and direst curses of humanity. The Prince of Peace, whose throne is for ever and ever, "shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn the art of war any more." Commerce shall be purified from its cupidity, legislation from its injustice, literature from its pride, and philosophy from its scepticism. The principles of Christianity shall permeate every thing, and leaven the whole mass of society with the spirit of that kingdom, "which is righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." Then will be realised all the glowing descriptions contained in the chapters of Revelation, to which I have already alluded, and men, and angels, and God himself, rejoice over "the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

How many centuries shall roll away before this blessed era of harmonized, sanctified humanity shall arrive, how much more of its history our world is to spend in sin and rebellion, and in groans and tears, it is not for any of us to say. Some imagine they hear the clocks of prophecy and providence both set in harmony to the divine decree, striking the eleventh hour. I am not so skilled in prophetical arithmetic, or mystic symbols: "it is not for me to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in

his own power," and I am content with the promise and the hope, that the time is coming, when "the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ."

What vials of wrath have yet to be exhausted upon the world, or through what tribulations the church has yet to pass on her way to her millennial, and to her triumphal state, it is not for us even to conjecture. Perhaps there are conflicts for her to endure, of which she is now happily ignorant, but for which, however severe, the grace that comes from above will prepare her. Still, she must be victorious, for hers is the cause of God. Yes, Christians, the days roll on, when

"the shout of the isles shall swell the thunder of the continent: when the Thames and the Danube, when the Tiber and the Rhine, shall call upon the Euphrates, the Ganges, and the Nile; and the loud concert shall be joined by the Hudson, the Mississippi, and the Amazon, singing with one heart and one voice, 'Alleluia! Salvation! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!'"

Followers of the Lamb, professors of Christianity, friends of your species, survey that wondrous scene, gaze upon that enchanting panorama, no mere picture of a fervid imagination, but sketched by the pencil of a divine hand, as of something which the resources and honour of God are pledged to render a glorious reality. Look at it, I say, a world converted from every error that blinds the judgement, every passion that corrupts the heart, every vice that degrades the character, and every curse that damns the soul; to every thing that purifies, exalts, and saves its miserable inhabitants, and that by a power which subdues their understanding to truth, their habits to rectitude, and their hearts to happiness. If any dark ground be needed, to throw

out in more impressive and attractive beauty this age of the future, if any thing more than the contemplation of it, apart and by itself, be requisite to fix your attention, kindle your enthusiasm, and engage your exertions, compare it with the world's past history, and its present aspect, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." This is the most awful, deeply shaded moral picture ever drawn by an inspired or uninspired pen, and it is affecting to consider that the apostle is not writing the annals of hell, and the biography of devils, but of earth, and our species. Such was this world in the apostle's days, as the history of Greece and Rome in their highest civilisation clearly attests, and as the disclosures of Herculaneum and Pompeii corroborate. Such is the world in our days, as ob-

servation and report demonstrate. Such is God's world, such is our world, thus lying in the wicked one, clasped firmly in his arms, polluted by his embrace, and ruined by his arts. O Christians, can ye bear to look at it, rendered a thousand times more loathsome, hideous, and revolting, by the light of millennial glory, which from the preceding pages is poured over it to reveal more impressively its frightful apostacy from God. Sink not into despair. It is not always to be thus. In the midst of those deep sorrows which you feel, or ought to feel, over this dark and dreadful scene, turn to the other side of the contrast and rejoice in prospect of the millennial glory. By whom is the reign of truth, holiness, and happiness, to be brought on? Who will be the direct and chief instruments of accomplishing this greatest of all happy revolutions, this wondrous spiritual renovation? Not the mighty ones of the earth, not monarchs, nobles, and statesmen, not warriors and heroes, not philosophers and scholars, not poets and artists, as such; but the ministers of religion, and the members of our churches, the men of faith, of prayer, and of zeal; the men who have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; the men who are despised as enthusiasts, or hated as fanatics; yes, these are the men to whom the world will stand indebted for its restoration to God, to happiness, and immortality. What an inducement, and what an obligation, to more intense devotedness, are here? To bring on this stupendous and auspicious change is your work; and O, what work ought it to be, to accomplish such an end! See here the object, the result, and the reward, of your labour. You cannot labour in vain,

not a moment of time, not a farthing of property, not an effort of activity, not a prayer of faith, can be lost. Borrow inspiration for your zeal from the prospect of the latter day glory, which you are to be the means of producing. Let the groans of the unregenerated world melt and move you to the most intense pity; and let the anticipated shouts of the redeemed one, awaken all the energies of your zeal and hope. What is wanted, and all that is wanted, under God's blessing, for the world's conversion to Christ, is an earnest Ministry, and an earnest Church.

May they both, and all, awake to a deep sense of their duty, and a holy ambition to perform it, combined at the same time with a believing confidence in the truth of the Divine promise, and the all sufficiency of the Holy Spirit!

WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL STATE OF OUR CHURCHES?

Reprinted, with large additions, from "The Evangelical Magazine," for 1859.

THE STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

What is the Spiritual State of our Churches? This is a question which should be asked with the deepest seriousness, impartiality, and solicitude, by all their members. Indifference to such an inquiry betrays a degree of insensibility incompatible with true Christianity. Can the man who is utterly unconcerned about the internal condition of his country possess a particle of genuine patriotism? As little of true godliness can he pretend to, who is uninquiring and unanxious about the state of vital religion and its appropriate fruits, amongst the great body of professing Christians. The churches are, or should be, the lights of the world; this is one part of their design, and it will be accomplished in exact proportion to the degree of vital and consistent piety which they possess; their light may be obscure as the dawn, or resplendent as noon-tide brightness.

I invite, therefore, the most solemn attention to the ensuing pages, in which will be found, perhaps, some things unpalatable to many, but are they true? If so, let us put away what is wrong and supply what is deficient.

I propose, in the following papers, to take up this question with reference to our body as Congregation-

alists, and to point out what appear to me to be our excellences, our faults, and our defects. What I say of ourselves will apply also to other bodies; and, therefore, what I shall advance may be considered as my opinion of the condition of the Christian world at large; and, as my individual opinion, it must, of course, be taken only for what it is worth.

It is not my intention to dwell at any length on what may be called the historical details of our denomination. Public confidence in statistics does not strengthen, and I shall not attempt anything in reference to numbers, beyond the assertion of the fact, that, we like other bodies of Christians, are sadly behind the increase of population. It is a deplorable consideration for us all, that the domain of Satan is filling up far more rapidly than that of Christ. As regards the general features of our churches, it is but too apparent that while they are multiplying and strengthening in the metropolis and large towns, they are, at least in many places, getting smaller and poorer in the lesser towns, and require the serious consideration of our body. It is equally evident, that the churches are characterised too much by fastidiousness and fickleness, in regard to the choice and retention of their pastors, while the pastors are no less characterised by restlessness and movability in regard to the churches. I am aware that fixedness may, and does, too strongly prevail in some cases; but in the present day, it seems as if all ministers might be regarded as moveable, and as if movability were a virtue and a means of usefulness. Much mischief will result to us if the bond which unites the pastor and the church be considered so slight a thing as to be soon and easily broken.

Our colleges, on which so much depends, are, I hope, as regards their theological teaching, in a sound and healthful state; but some of them are only half full of students, and, perhaps, need to be reminded that, with all their concern to train up learned men, they should unite the greatest solicitude and care to send forth earnest preachers and judicious pastors. How few men of great promise come from any of them! How is this?

I. It is not, however, on these matters, or any cognate subjects, that I mean now to dwell, but upon the internal and spiritual condition of our churches. Like the Lord Jesus in the survey which he took of the seven Asiatic churches, I would mention, first of all their excellences.

And some very distinguished ones present themselves. The most superficial observers cannot fail to be impressed with the Christian activity and liberality which everywhere prevail, and which thus conform them to our Lord's metaphorical description, that they are "the salt of the earth, and the light of the world." This is a high commendation; and it is, happily, a true one. This has come on by such gradual advances, that those who have grown up within the last thirty years can have no conception of the different state of things in this age to what it was half a century ago. Those of us who were on the public stage at the commencement of 1809, and can remember what the aspect of things was then, can scarcely believe we are in the same church in the beginning of 1859, any more than we can realize the fact that we are inhabitants of the same planet, when we see night turned into day in our streets by gaslight, distance annihilated by railways, and intelligence con-

veyed by lightning. When I became pastor of my church more than fifty-three years ago, the only object of Congregational benevolence and action was the Sunday School, which was then conducted in a private house, hired for the purpose. There was nothing else; literally, nothing else we set our hands to. We had not then taken up even the Missionary Society. And our state was but a specimen of the inactivity of the great bulk of our churches, at least in the provinces, throughout the whole country. We may well wonder what the Christians of those days could have been thinking of. Now, look at the state of things at the opening of the year 1859. If I allude to my own church, it is not for the sake of ostentation or self-commendation; for we are not one whit better than some others. Ours is but a specimen and average of the rest. We have now an organization for the London Missionary Society, which raises, as its regular contribution, nearly £500 per annum, besides occasional donations to meet special appeals, which, upon an average, may make up another £100 a year. For the Colonial Missionary Society we raise, annually, £70. For our Sunday and Day-schools, which comprehend nearly two thousand children, we raise £200. We support two Town Missionaries, at a cost of £200. Our ladies conduct a working society for Orphan Mission Schools in the East Indies, the proceeds of which reach, on an average, £50 a year; they sustain also a Dorcas Society for the poor of our town; a Maternal Society, of many branches, in various localities; and a Female Benevolent Society, for visiting the sick poor. We have a Religious Tract Society, which employs ninety distributors, and spends nearly £50 a year in the purchase of tracts. Our Village

Preachers' Society, which employs twelve or fourteen lay agents, costs us scarcely anything. We raise £40 annually for the County Association. We have a Young Men's Brotherly Society, for general and religious improvement, with a library of 2000 volumes. We have also, Night-schools for young men and women, at small costs, and Bible classes for other young men and women. In addition to all this, we raise £100 per annum for Spring Hill College.

I again say that this is but an average of Congregational exertion and liberality in this day of general activity. Yea, many churches of our own and other denominations perhaps, greatly excel us. And after all we none of us come up to our resources, our opportunities, or our obligations. We all could do more, ought to do more, must do more. Still, compare this with what my congregation did with its single object, the Sunday-school, fifty-three years ago. We have since then laid out £23,000 in improving the old chapel, and building a new one; in the erection of school-rooms, the college, and seven small chapels in the town and neighbourhood. We have also formed two separate Independent churches, and have, jointly with another congregation, formed a third, and all but set up a fourth, and are at this time in treaty for two pieces of freehold land, which will cost £700, to build two more chapels in the suburbs of the town. I am afraid that this will savour of boasting and self-glorification. I can only say, this is not its design, but simply to exhibit the features of the age and the spirit of our churches, in the way of activity and liberality; and also to show what a concentration of power is contained in one church, and what an amount of good it might do. Oh,

that the churches of Christ did but consider what a power, both for kind and degree, they possess! What ought to be the influence upon the population of the place in which it is situated, and upon the world at large, of a church consisting of 500, 700, or 1000 members; and what would it be if each member did what he or she could do! The churches of Christ have even yet to learn the full extent of both their power and their obligations.

In addition to this, there are, in all our congregations, many and liberal subscribers to our public societies, such as the Bible Society, the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, and all other objects of Christian zeal and benevolence. What, I ask, does this manifest and prove? Why, that activity and liberality have been at length pretty generally recognised as no less obligatory upon the individual conscience, than the sanctity of the Sabbath, the duty of private worship, and the observance of the Lord's Supper. The man who now stands back from these things, who lends no helping hand to the evangelization of his country and the world, is looked at with much the same suspicion as he who is never at the house of God. Zeal, activity, liberality are now no longer considered matters of religious taste, but of solemn duty, as essentials of true piety, evidences of genuine faith, and concomitants of the Christian profession. It was not so, at least generally and conspicuously, when I commenced my ministry. The thing was not understood and felt as it is now. The founders of the Missionary societies had to preach and print apologies for attempting the conversion of the heathen. Witness Dr. Bogue's elaborate sermon at the first Missionary meeting, entitled, "Ob-

jections against Missions to the heathen answered."* Christians went to the house of God, sat still in their pews, heard sermons, attended sacraments, and doled out an occasional guinea to a charity sermon or the building of a chapel, and there their liberality ended. It is not so now. People have begun to ask, in serious earnestness, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and are laying money, time, labour, influence, upon the altar of God. It is really surprising and delightful to see what sacrifices, not only of their leisure, which they would gladly devote to the soft enjoyments of their own hearths, firesides, and family circles, but also of the time they would give to their business, many noble-minded men are constantly making to promote the cause of God and the good of their fellow-creatures.

Now, what do we see in all this? What? Why the very dawn of millennial glory. It is not merely in the various organizations of Christian zeal that I delight, but in the principle that raised and that supports them. Were they all to be dissolved to-morrow, that principle, if it survived them, would raise for itself other and nobler institutions. The church of God, being wakened up to this knowledge of its mission, and this sense of its duty, will, I believe, never let the work of God stand still. It has started in a career of zeal for Christ, in which it will never stop till it has brought the world to Him. As a ground of this hope, I ask, how has the year 1859 opened, as regards this matter? Do we see

* Mr Marshman's recent volumes on the life and labours of those incomparable missionaries, Carey, Marshman, and Ward, give us an account of not only the apathy but the incredulity of the Christian church at that time as to the work of missions to the heathen, and prove the wonderful progress of the faith and activity of the churches.

any symptons of decline in the zeal, activity, and liberality of our churches? Do we see a spirit of lukewarmness creeping over them? Do we see the men of wealth closing their hands, locking their coffers, and saying, "I have done giving?" Do we see our middle class men retiring from committees, and saying, "I am weary of this work?" Do we see our tract distributors and Sunday-school teachers throwing up their offices, and saying, "We will labour no more?" If so, it would be a dark omen for the future. But the most timid and suspicious eye can detect nothing of the kind. Never was there more activity or liberality, or a stronger disposition for both, than now. Let any new object be presented to the Christian public, it is sure to find supporters, even in cases of a doubtful nature. The spirit is up, and no signs of decadence are yet visible, but many signs of increasing vigour.

Here then I say, is a glorious feature of our times. Nothing like it has been known in the Christian church since the days of the apostles. Still, I do not mean to assert that, as a whole, it proceeds from pure Christian principle, or has reached the point to which it ought to extend. Vanity, regard to reputation, the compulsion of entreaty, motiveless liberality, the fashion of the times, mere love of activity, and the dread of being behind others, have all much to do in swelling the stream of public benevolence, and prevent me from regarding it as a true and exact estimate of the amount of spiritual religion in existence. It is a good thing, as regards the world, for liberality to be in fashion, even where it is in great part only fashion. I believe, however, that a large portion of what is now devoted to the

cause of Christ and humanity is given from conscientious motives, and as matter both of duty and privilege.

We must also guard against the mistake of supposing that the wealth now devoted to the cause of Christ and humanity comes up to the full measure of our obligation, or the necessities of the case. It is our felicity, could we but think so, to live in an age and country in which Christianity is beginning (but only beginning,) to manifest its expansive powers both in the hearts of its professors and in the world. Instead of thinking that all the ways of spreading it, either in this country or abroad, are yet found out, we may be perfectly sure that the ingenuity which has opened so many channels of spiritual influence has not exhausted its inventive skill, but will find out many more.

We are ready to suppose that by our organizations for converting and instructing Jews and Gentiles, the heathen abroad and the heathen at home, males and females, adults and infants, and soldiers and sailors; for circulating Bibles and tracts; for supporting schools and colleges; for carrying into effect schemes preventive and reformatory of vice and misery in cities and villages, and for other objects of benevolence and philanthropy too numerous to mention, we have found out every dark corner of our world into which the light of Christianity can be introduced, every part of Satan's domain where immortal souls may be rescued from his grasp, and every method of diffusing the knowledge of Christ. Let us not deceive ourselves in this matter, and imagine that we have reached all the objects to which our assistance can be given, or embraced all the opportunities afforded us, or that we have arrived at the maximum of liberality.

No such thing. The circle of Christian activity will certainly go on continually widening, and the obligations of Christian liberality will go on continually increasing. There is a spirit up, that will show us yet in how many more ways we can spread abroad the principles of our holy religion. Be it so, that some of the organizations of sacred labour may be, and perhaps should be, amalgamated; yet others will become necessary. If, therefore, that excellence of the churches to which this paper alludes be maintained, their resources must be called out still more profusely than they have ever yet been. If God's providence present to us new fields of labour, new channels of influence, as it undoubtedly will, both abroad and at home, we must be prepared to embrace them. At the present moment, God is throwing open to our evangelizing operations the whole Eastern world, India, China, Japan; and also Africa. His dispensations at this juncture are wonderful. Nothing like it has occurred in the history of our planet. At such a time, it will not do for us to content ourselves with ordinary contributions, and that measure of liberality we had twenty, nay, even ten years ago. It will not do for us to be ever advancing in our luxurious habits of life, which is really the case, and yet be satisfied with the same amount of Christian beneficence. The parsimonious cry, when a new object is presented to us, or a new demand for an old one is made upon us, "What! something new! Really, there is no end of it. I am tired out with applications. It will not do." A new object! Yes, and another and another yet; and as long as a new one can be found, and we have the means of supporting it, we must not be weary in well doing. We must abridge our luxuries, if need be, to

raise the means of supporting it. Have any of us done this yet? Yea, we must curtail what we have been accustomed to consider our comforts, and even our very necessaries, till we are reduced to the widow's two mites, if we cannot by any other means embrace the opportunities which God is opening before us for carrying on His cause in the earth. For my own part, it seems to me as if our wealthy men must take a few more steps yet, towards the beneficence recorded in Acts ii. iv. They have yet given of their abundance; the abundance itself must be given next.

How much depends upon us as to what both the church and the world are to be in future ages! Our individual existence has derived additional importance from the circumstances in which we are placed. We each of us help to mould the age, and are moulded by it. We never could have lived in a more momentous era, and should, every one of us, be aware of this. Never before had men such work to do. We have awful responsibilities lying upon us, in consequence of this; may we have grace to know our position and the day of our merciful visitation!

II. Having given an encouraging and, I believe, a true representation of the excellences of our churches, as manifested by their zeal, activity, and liberality; I now proceed to give a less favourable view of the case, and present for consideration their faults.

It is somewhat difficult to form, at any time, a correct estimate of the existing state of religion as compared with some previous periods. And it is well for us all, and always, to remember Solomon's exhortation: "Say not, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou does not wisely inquire

concerning this." The more eminently pious of every age have been prone to complain of the faults of their own times, and to think them greater than those of bygone periods of the Church's history. We see the evils of our own times; we only read of those of the men who have gone before us. Dropping, then, for the most part, a comparison of our present state with past times, I shall appeal to the true standard of all spiritual religion, and endeavour by that to ascertain our real state.

1. As the first, most prominent, and most prevailing fault of our churches now, I mention worldliness, or, as it is frequently designated, earthly-mindedness. The least acquaintance with the Christian records and the Christian system must convince us, one should think, that these are intended to form a character which, in reference to things both temporal and eternal, shall, in its spirit and manifestation, be different from, and contrary to, that of an unconverted man. In this, Christianity has a vast advantage over Judaism. The latter was, to a considerable extent, a worldly system; its revelation of a future state was dim; its promises were of earthly things; its ecclesiastical polity, though administered by God himself, was in part worldly. There seems to have been little to foster an unearthly, spiritual, and heavenly mind, even in the more pious Israelites. It is altogether different with us. We are under a covenant "established upon better promises." All in the way of motive is spiritual and heavenly. Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. Eternal life in heaven is the grand theme of the New Testament. Fruitful seasons, temporal comforts, augmented wealth, worldly prosperity, are no longer the incentives

to obedience, or the promised rewards of good conduct. God, by his almost entire silence about these things, and his constant exhibition of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," has somewhat disparaged the objects of human ambition, and taught us to disparage them too, at least in comparison with heavenly things. By the very revelation to our faith and hope of the glories of the celestial world, He intends, not indeed to annihilate nor entirely to hide earthly things, but certainly to throw them in some measure into the shade, to lessen their importance, and to draw off, in some degree, our attention from them. Just see what is said about these two classes of objects in the New Testament: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." "Let those that buy be as though they possessed not, and they that use the world as not abusing it." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

Now, in the view of these passages, and very many others, how forcibly does the question of the Apostle come to us: "Seeing all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!" What an unearthly spirit, what an impress of eternity, what a temper of heaven should there be in us! Professing to believe all this, to hope for all this, to love all this, to yield up ourselves to all this, ought we not to be a people really, practically differing from the people of the world: seen to be different, known and acknowledged to be different: different in our prevailing spirit, in our pleasures, in our tastes, in our mode of doing business, in our feelings and conduct in regard to wealth, in our behaviour under losses, and in the maxims which govern us? Ought we not to appear to be the conquerors and not the captives of the world? But is it so? Is not the very opposite to all this the present characteristic of many professors? Has not an inundation of worldliness flowed in upon the church? Do we not see a heap of debris, and accumulations of mud, around the walls and in the streets of Zion?

It is, of course, admitted that a Christian may and must engage in secular business, if he has not a competent fortune to do without it; that he may become a skilful, clever man of business; that he ought to be diligent, and may, by honest industry, acquire wealth. An incompetent or idle tradesman does no honour to religion. And it is also admitted that it was never more difficult than in this age to get on in business and maintain a conscience void of offence. The temptations to depart from the strict line of integrity were never so many and so powerful as they are now. It is hard

work to live and follow whatsoever things are true and honest. But then, if we are Christians, it must be done. Now, then, look at the conduct of many professors of religion. Are they not almost as completely swallowed up in the eagerness to be rich, in the ever-widening circle of their trading speculations, in their hard, grinding, grubbing way of doing business, in their adopting the same tricks, artifices, half-falsehoods, half-dishonour, and half-dishonesty, of unprofessing worldlings? Read the advertisements in our journals and magazines, and the bills in our windows: what puffings and praises, what assertions of transcendent excellence, and declarations of superiority above all others, what mendacious attractions, what little, mean, ridiculous arts to catch attention, do we meet with in some who ought to know better! I do not, as may be supposed, object to advertising, trade cannot be carried on without it: nor do I condemn such modest ingenuity in attracting notice as is consistent with truth and with things of good report: but when this degenerates, as it often does, into half-falsehoods, it is what no professing Christian ought to resort to.

Do we not see many practically rejecting the apostolic rules of trade and commerce, disregarding whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, and smiling at the simplicity of the man who would tie them down to such rules? I am aware of the rage of competition, of the rivalry of trade, of the absolute necessity of skill, diligence, and even shrewdness, to cope with jealousy, envy, and trickery: but still, I say, the apostolic rule holds good, and the man who cannot get on without trampling it under foot must not get on at all. If a Christian

cannot get rich without losing his religion, he must be content to be poor. In a commercial country like this, and in times so intensely commercial as ours, the greatest snare to Christians is to act like worldly men in many of the looser maxims and questionable practices of the age.

Is not this worldly spirit manifested in many instances by the temptation to rash and reckless speculation? Surely there must be meaning in the Apostle's words, and meaning applicable to all ages and states of society: "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." Not that this is to be interpreted rigidly and literally. Yet certainly its spirit must be supposed to condemn an excessive eagerness after wealth. This is plain from what follows: "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." What is it but this determination, at almost all hazards, and almost by any means to be rich, that makes so many go on ever enlarging their already wide circle of trade, launching out beyond their capital, speculating largely and imprudently, having recourse to fictitious capital in accommodation-paper, following the bubbles which others have blown, and then resorting, by a kind of compulsion, as they suppose and feel, to means for meeting an exigency which commercial honour, to say nothing of Christian principle, forbids? What is it, I say, but a worldly spirit that leads to all this? Not content with plodding on at a slow pace in the humbler and more obscure path of patient and honest industry,

many must gallop towards wealth on the high road of speculation. They have seen some fortunate adventurers in this way leap to affluence, and they too must try their luck. Ah! but how few are the great prizes in this lottery, how numerous the small ones, and how multiplied the blanks! How many scandals occur in this way to the ruin of the individuals themselves, and to the discredit of religion! Have we not all known instances of this kind, of men who were not dishonest, who would have shuddered at the very idea of a deliberate and intentional fraud, and never perpetrated one; but who, in consequence of the unexpected failure of some rash unwise and unwarranted speculation, have resorted to means for averting a crash, which, in other circumstances, they would have avoided with detestation? They never designed to rob any one, but fully purposed to pay every one their own when the speculation brought them the fortune they confidently expected. The cloud, which they hoped would pour down a shower of gold upon their cherished object, sent forth a thunderbolt which shivered it to pieces. Promises made with other anticipations all failed; injured and exasperated creditors heaped reproaches upon the author of their loss; and the people, who wait for the halting of professors, tauntingly exclaimed, "This is your religious man!"

Such cases, I regret to say, are not uncommon. Not that they are more frequent with professors than with persons who make no profession. I will venture to affirm that for one such among the former, there are ten among the latter; but then, as one execution of a criminal makes more noise than the lives of ten exemplary honest men, so one disgraceful failure of a

professing Christian occasions more reproachful talk than the still more disgraceful failure of ten men of the world. Some malignantly pretend, they would sooner do business with a man who does not profess religion, than with one who does. This, I believe is a falsehood, mere calumnious hatred of religion, and enmity against God. Still, what a lesson and a warning does this hold out to professing Christians, to be most circumspect and cautious in all their secular transactions, and most resolute in their determination to be willing to suffer, like the Apostle, though in different matters, the loss of all things, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.

I am sure I do but express the feelings of all my brethren in the ministry, when I say I am sick and weary of the reports which are floating about the world, though not, perhaps, affecting our own members, of the misconduct of professing Christians in reference to money matters. Of the three prevailing sins to which Christians in every age are exposed and tempted, intemperance, licentiousness, and worldliness, the most prevailing is the last; and it is the most difficult to bring under the discipline of the church, and to bring home to a man's own conscience. How many are there who would feel exquisite pangs of remorse for one act of intoxication or licentiousness, who would go on through a whole series of inconsistencies in money matters, and yet their conscience scarcely ever trouble them; and who, while the church would take cognizance of the former, would, with regard to the latter, be suffered to go on uncited and unreproved.

Utterly inconceivable is the mischief which is done to the credit of religion, and the souls of men, by the

want of honourable, and, in some cases, of honest principle among the professors of religion. Infidels are confirmed in their infidelity, the profane in their profanity, and the worldly in their worldliness, by these occurrences. A single inconsistency of this kind in the conduct even of a professor who never did such a thing before, and will never do it again, may produce, on more minds than one, an ineffaceable impression and an inextinguishable prejudice against religion. Therefore, let let us watch and be circumspect always, in everything, and before everybody. The words of our Lord ought to be ever sounding in our ears, "Woe to the world because of offences: it must needs be that offences will come, but woe to that man by whom they come." Let it only be imagined, what an impression would be produced on the unconverted part of mankind, if all who profess to be converted carried out the apostolic rule of trade: if in all cases it were an established and well-known fact, that every professor of religion were an honest and honourable man; one whose word was his bond, who would rather suffer wrong than do it, and was neither a rogue nor a screw. I am aware that the advantage which would redound to religious people, to whom honesty would be found the best policy, would, in that case, be so great, that many would hypocritically simulate religion for the sake of its benefit; for, as all would be led to deal with people they could thoroughly trust, it would be palpable to every one that "godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." But even by them an undesigned compliment would be paid to religion, when it was intentionally counterfeited for the sake of its temporal advantages. And is it not,

then, the solemn duty of every professing Christian to be thus known as an honest, generous, and honourable man? Ought not his religion to be carried from the sanctuary, and the church, and the family altar, into the shop, into the exchange, into the market? Ought it not to preside over buying and selling, and enter into bargains and covenants? Why, half the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, and no small part of those of the New, are about these very matters. "Holiness to the Lord" should be written on all our merchandise. Are we not commanded by Christ to let our light shine before men? Now this intimates not only that our religion must be visible, but resplendent. A rushlight is visible, but is it resplendent? And to shine before men, it must be conspicuous in those matters that fall more immediately under their notice. They do not see us in our closets, or at our family altars themselves; but they do see us in matters of trade and in all money transactions. It is there we are a city set on a hill, which cannot be hidden. Nothing can shine which is not radiant as compared with what is around it; and we cannot shine unless we are remarkably honest, honourable, and true. A Christian is not only to be as moral as a moral worldling, but more so, else he cannot shine before that man. And yet, are there not some men, making no profession of religion, and possessing none, who outshine many who are church members, in the sterling integrity, the truthfulness, and the honour of their money transactions? Just before I penned this sentence, I was conversing with one of the richest and most fortunate men in this town, who told me he was started in life by a most upright, generous, and noble-minded man, who was an infidel, and endeavoured

to make him one, and had almost succeeded, by the force of his beautiful moral conduct, especially as contrasted with the gross inconsistencies of many who called themselves Christians. O, what is a profession of religion worth, which in the moralities of trade is outshone by the conduct of an infidel?

What an opportunity, were they but eager to embrace it, have professing Christians to shine, in this age of corrupt trading principles! How infected, to its very core, with unsound principles, is the great commercial body! Some have gone so far as to say all trade is a lie. And indeed truth, justice, honesty, and honour, seem becoming almost unknown in trade. In such circumstances, the Christian of the present day carries on his business. Trying, severely trying, I know it is, and much do I pity him. So I should have done the believer in primitive times, when, under the Roman Empire, he was required to burn incense to the statues of the emperor, or suffer martyrdom. What is a believer called to do now, compared with what a believer was called to do then? If religion would not bend to the feelings of humanity when life itself depended upon such a seemingly slight circumstance as burning a few grains of incense before a statue, rest assured it will not be more flexible when it is only property and worldly comfort that are at stake. The test of religion then was the temptation to idolatry; now it is the temptation to dishonesty. Ours is far the less severe of the two. "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." If we cannot now refrain from getting money by untruthfulness, dishonesty, dishonour, trickery, how could we have refrained, in times of persecution, from forbidden means of saving life? What, at most, is it

that men fear now, by following the things that are true, honest, just, and by sacrificing gains dishonourably obtained? Absolute poverty? No. There is small danger of that, at least in most cases. It is only a little lower grade in society. If they do not get so much profit, they cannot live quite so genteelly, so luxuriously. They cannot inhabit so large a house, cannot have such elegant furniture, cannot give such entertainments, cannot keep a carriage. It is to support these things that the laws of honesty and honour in trade are sacrificed by so many. They are not satisfied with competency, but must have abundance. And even professors of religion are carried away by this ambitious and aspiring disposition. And it has become a prevailing fault of the churches in this day. And how is it to be amended? The Apostle has told us: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." How dim, how worthless, does everything earthly appear when seen in the sunlight of the cross! It is by losing sight of that, by living so far from that, by forgetting that, we let the world get so much the upper hand of us. You must meditate more upon the cross, you must dwell more upon Calvary, you must be more familiar with the crucified One. So again, in another place, it is said: "Whatsover is born of God overcometh the world: this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." What is wanted is a stronger belief of the reality of an eternal existence beyond the grave; a firmer grasp by the hand of faith upon the glory, honour, and immortality, which are promised to those who continue patient in well-doing; a more frequent

and serious consideration of the shortness of time, and the brevity and uncertainty of life. O Christians, what is time to eternity; what is earth to heaven? Do think more about laying up treasures in heaven, and less about laying up treasures on earth. Even supposing you get safe to heaven at last, notwithstanding a too-prevailing worldliness of disposition, and some inconsistencies, what a diminution of the heavenly inheritance will these occasion! The Christian, who increases his worldly portion by means unworthy of his profession, is perpetually lessening his portion in paradise. There are degrees of glory in heaven; and the greatest will be obtained by those who by divine grace obtain the most signal victory over the world: and take it as a most certain truth, that, even upon earth, there is more real and sublime felicity to be obtained from a crucified world than from an idolised one.

I next mention the domestic and social habits of some professors. There seems to me to be a somewhat too prevailing taste for an expensive, showy style of living, an undue ambition to be "up with the age;" an excessive sensitiveness about fashion, gentility, and appearance. This is seen in their feverish anxiety to live in large houses, possess elegant furniture, and have numerous servants. It is equally displayed in gay, costly, and fashionable attire, about which the Apostles have given special exhortations, warnings, and directions. 1 Tim. ii. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 3. The same spirit is seen in the education of their children, especially their girls, who hear at home, from their mothers, in some cases, a great deal more about fashion than about religion; about elegant accomplishments than about womanly excellences, mental acquirements, self-government, and

relative virtues. In short, the families of many professors are the world in a small circle, with only the exclusion of some of its grosser forms. This has not unfrequently been carried on where there was no warrant for it on the ground of ample or even sufficient means. The consequences of this, far too often, have been disgraceful failures; and as it was the downfall of a professor, religion has suffered in its credit and character. What ideas of religion must worldly people bring away from the families of some professors in which they have been for awhile residing as visitors? They ought to be able to say, "In that house I have breathed the very atmosphere of piety. From all I have seen and heard, I am persuaded God dwells there." Never was needless show, extravagance, and luxury, so sinful in a wealthy professor as in this age, when the demands for money to carry on the cause of God are multiplying so fast every year. The disposition to unnecessary expensiveness in domestic and social habits is infecting the middle and lower classes of professors, as well as the higher. Fashion is the goddess to whose shrine too many even of these repair with a devotion as ardent as it is sincere. True, it is an age of refinement; and taste and elegance are continually spreading their beauties over the surface of society. This makes it all the more necessary for professing Christians to be upon their guard lest they become too eager for the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

Akin to this, is the worldliness exhibited by some professors in their social parties and entertainments. I am duly aware of the impossibility of laying down any definite line beyond which, in these matters, professors may not go. To such things, the customs of the

age in which we live, and the circles in which we move, prescribe laws to which, in some measure, we all submit. But then religion comes in here to fix the proper limits of our obedience. Be it that we are all members of civil society, we are to recollect that we are also members of a Christian church. We, as professors of religion, have adopted the New Testament as our statute-book. It is everywhere supposed, expressed, insisted upon, in our Book, that there is really a difference between Christians and other men, a distinction that lies deeper than a mode of dress or language; that we are of another spirit. 1 Cor. iv. 7; 2 Cor. vi. 14, 17; Titus ii. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 9. The Christian community rises in the midst of all others whatever, as in spirit and temper diverse from all others. In personal, domestic, and social habits, we are to be guided by Christ's laws, which are not to be contravened by other laws. If the habits of society coincide with those of Christianity, we are to adopt them; for we are not to oppose them for the sake of singularity. As in religious matters, so in those of common life, we are to conform as far as God's Word will allow, and dissent when that commands us to do so. The ancient Spartan was governed by the laws of Lycurgus, and did not permit those of Athens or of Corinth to interfere with his Lacedæmonian severity. A taste for what was refined, elegant, luxurious, might do very well for the latter, but not for him. Thus is it with the Christian. He has to ask, not what will suit the men of the world, but what will comport with the letter and spirit of the New Testament.

Acting upon this principle, he rejects as a source of pleasure and amusement the theatre, the opera, the ball-room, the card-table, the race-course, the betting-

room. These are so manifestly hostile, some of them to the morality, and all of them to the spirituality, of evangelical piety, that professors do, at least most of them, abstain from these things. I say most of them, for I do know that a stealthy visit to some of these sources of worldly pleasure is occasionally paid, to see, as they affirm, the vanity and sinfulness of the world, that they may learn to hate it by observation, and not merely by report. That is, they will go in the way of temptation in order to conquer it. They will pluck off one blushing, tempting, fruit from the forbidden tree of knowledge, that they may become wise by experience in their acquaintance with evil. Still, it is admitted that few professors are ever found at these places of resort. But will some of their own entertainments and amusements comport with the spirit of the New Testament? To refer to their dinner parties, are there not an ambition, an extravagance, and expensiveness which are inconsistent with Christian simplicity, manifested in them? It is, I repeat, impossible to fix the exact limit of propriety. It would be ridiculous in the extreme to attempt to draw up a Christian bill of fare, or to prescribe the nature and number of dishes, or of wines, a professor may set upon his table, or what articles of luxury his dessert may consist of. I can only speak of general principles and tendencies. Of how many festive occasions may it not, with singular propriety, be said, "Might not this have been sold for so much, and have been given to the poor" heathen? When money is so much wanted, I repeat, for God's cause, not a shilling should be wasted in unnecessary luxury.

In Scott the commentator's life, he records a fact

which I have alluded to, I believe, in one of my works.*

And while on the subject of entertainments, should I not refer to the large and gay evening parties which are becoming more and more common even among professors of religion? Private balls, or at any rate, dancing, is, I believe, resorted to in some circles. It may, perhaps, be difficult logically to prove that these things, in themselves, are absolutely sinful; it should be enough to prove that they are inexpedient. And, at the same time, it would be lowering religion itself, to set up any such line of distinction as this as constituting the main difference between a converted and unconverted person. Still, there are some things, certainly, not immoral, which are by pretty general consent considered inconsistent for a Christian, and should be abstained from.

Worldliness, I think, is creeping into our very religion itself, as manifested in some of those practices which are resorted to for raising funds for the various objects of religious zeal. Who that has witnessed one of our modern bazaars, and seen the flutter, the gaiety, the military band, the gambling of this Vanity Fair, would venture to say, that all this harmonises with the dignity and sanctity, the spirituality and heavenliness of our holy religion? Some of our tea-meetings, got up for religious purposes, are, I fear, degenerating into mere worldly amusements. I do not want to see religion moving among the abodes of man, a spectral form, with the surliness of a stoic, the austerity of a monk, or the isolation of a hermit, looking rather like a spirit of darkness than an angel of light. What I covet is to see

* The quotation will be found at p. 209 of this volume.

it the semblance of a being come down from heaven, and exhibiting something of the holiness and happiness of the world from which it came, intent upon maintaining its true character in these abodes of sin and Satan, and upon getting back safely to its native skies, and taking as many as it can with it to the world of life and glory. What I wish to see in the professors of religion is the deep and visible impress of the cross of Christ in a spirit of crucifixion to the world, and the manifestation of a character in some measure resplendent with the radiance of Paradise. In short, what I desire is the full development, in the character and conduct of professing Christians, of that expression of the Apostle, "Your conversation is in heaven:" that is, as the word signifies, your citizenship is in heaven; "you have received the freedom of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, and are incorporated with the heavenly state." The idea is, that there are two great communities in the universe, that of the world, and that of heaven, each governed by its own laws, seeking its own objects, and animated by its own spirit; one governed by worldly laws, the other by heavenly ones. You, professing Christians, belong to the heavenly community, and should be, in spirit and conduct, in conformity with it. Does not this, then, in the most impressive manner, show how unworldly, how holy, spiritual, and heavenly, you should be? Between true Christians and others, there should be more difference than between the inhabitants of two different countries, just as there is more difference between the heavenly and earthly countries, than between any two earthly ones.

But there is another manifestation of worldliness in the conduct of professors, less thought of, indeed, and

less frequently adverted to than any I have yet mentioned, and that is the spirit with which they look upon political events. Some persons go so far as to think that a Christian ought never to touch politics; hence they read no newspaper, hold no secular office, and do not proclaim their principles, or fulfil their duties as citizens in the use of the elective franchise. I respect their motives, and admire their spirituality, but I think them wrong in this way of promoting it. I am not ignorant of the deep injury which the religion of many professors has sustained by their plunging into the turbid as well as troubled waters of politics, to which no angel conveys a healing virtue; but this only proves the abuse of the subject, not the sinfulness of its use. As members of society we receive the benefit of good government, and are bound to do what we can to promote it. Rights and privileges involve duties. The duties of the citizen are to be discharged as well as those of the Christian, and we are no more allowed to sink the citizen in the Christian than we are the Christian in the citizen. Our politics should be religious, but not our religion political. The Bible is not to be put aside by the newspaper, neither is the newspaper by the Bible. There is a time for each, and each should be taken up in its time. Their connexion is not so remote as it might appear to some. "I read the newspaper," said Dr. Bogue, "to see how God governs the world." Yes, and he might have added, to learn his duty towards the world. The newspaper indicates the course of Providence: it is the weather-vane that shows the quarter from whence the wind blows; the barometer that announces the weight of the atmosphere. The newspaper is the exponent of prophecy, and the director

of Christian zeal as well as of commerce and conquest. It is the newspaper which has communicated to us the great fact of the opening of China to Missionary enterprise. Let not professors, however, forget to use the public journals for this purpose. Let them not sink the Christian in the politician, nor look with the eye of a mere worldling on passing events. Alas! how few rise above the men of the world in their politics! Are not the great bulk of professors as deeply infected with the spirit of mere secularity in such matters, as the unconverted multitude? Even our religious newspapers, as they are called, are somewhat wanting here. In which of them do we find as much of the spirit of godliness mingling with their reference to passing events as might be wished and expected? Which of them leads us up as much as it might do to the overruling providence of God, and to the duties of his redeemed people in relation to the signs of the times? Do we not see too much reliance on the representations of our national strength, to the neglect of trust in God? Do we not see far too much of a warlike spirit breathed in their pages?

Christians are sadly deficient in the disposition and, perhaps, in the ability, to connect all passing events with the cause of religion and the kingdom of Christ. They need not be, cannot be, should not be, indifferent to passing events, as affecting the sublunary interests of the nation. The state and progress of liberty, education, commerce, art, literature, and science, ought to be valued by them on account of the value attaching to those things in themselves. The constitution of government, the formation of parties, the debates of the senate, may be, must be, should be, objects of interest

to them; but still they all should be viewed with the eye of a Christian as well as a citizen. They should be intent upon the manner in which this affects the cause which is still dearer to their hearts than that of secular patriotism. While the worldling is looking at the result of war and peace, of battles and victories, of negociations and of treaties, merely as they affect the progress of conquests and commerce, the diminution or aggrandisement of national greatness, they should ask, How will this influence the cause of Christ? Their eye, in viewing the rise and fall of empires, should be on the retributive providence of God, and on the overthrow of obstacles for the advancement of truth. Believing that Christ "is head over all things to his church," their occupation should be in tracing, as far as can be done, the links which connect the events of the times with the progress of the Gospel. The Bible should be close at hand to the newspaper, and faith to politics. But is it so? Are they not as worldly in their views, and in their feelings too, to a great extent, as those who make no profession of religion, and are entirely absorbed in the politics of this world?

I now mention, as a second fault, in some measure connected with the foregoing, a self-indulgent, ease-loving spirit; an effeminate, Sybarite disposition which shrinks from those duties, occupations, and engagements which require a sacrifice of bodily repose and comfort. The words of our Lord are still the standing-rule of discipleship, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." If there be meaning in words, these must imply that the true Christian spirit is self-denial. This was not intended to apply exclusively to that time, or to any age

of persecution, or to any peculiar external condition of the Church. It is the perpetual law of Christ's kingdom for all ages, all countries, all persons. We can no more be Christians without a spirit of self-denial, than we can be without repentance and faith, or truthfulness, justice, or chastity. It is a state of mind and a course of conduct essential to personal godliness. We must all, in one sense or other, be cross-bearers.

But in what does self-denial consist? Not in the self-imposed austerities of monachism or hermitism; nor in the self-inflicted penances of superstition: nor in the privation of the sober and moderate enjoyment of the lawful gratifications of our compound nature. Grace is not at war, any more than Reason, with the instincts of humanity; the Creator has not implanted these in our nature to be violently torn up by the Redeemer and Sanctifier. All that religion does with them is to keep them in due subjection to itself; not to eradicate them, but so far to crop their luxuriance as to prevent their overshading and chilling our virtues. To the wearer of sackcloth, the wallower in filth, the half-starved abstinent, the recluse of the cell, God says, "Who hath required this at your hand?" This is not self-denial, but self-degradation, a disgusting caricature of the virtue recommended by our Lord. It is self-gratification under a hideous form; self-pleasing in a way of self-torture; the worship of self in a Moloch shape. Self-denial means the subjection of all the promptings of self-love to the will of God. It is the surrender of ourselves to God, to do his will and please him in the way of his commandments, rather than ourselves. In other words, it is to prefer known and prescribed duty to gratification. This state of mind will

develope itself in various ways. If any one has injured us, duty says, "Freely forgive him:" sinful self says, "Retaliate." The maxim of the devil says, "Revenge is sweet;" and sinful self affirms the same. Revenge is self-indulgence: forgiveness, with our corrupt hearts, is self-denial. So also, in a different case, if we have injured another, reason, religion, conscience, all say, "Confess your fault." The evil heart says, "No, I cannot thus humble myself." Self-denial requires confession: self-indulgence resists it. So again, the whole business of internal sanctification, in our present imperfect state, is a course of self-denial. We are to "mortify our members," to "crucify the flesh," to "keep under our body." All this implies and requires self-denial, for it is a resistance rather than a gratification of our sinful nature. Indeed, the whole course of the Christian life is one continued habit of self-denial, or the subjection of our sinful self to our renewed and holy self. In the course of his business, a man may by a little sacrifice of Christian principle acquire considerable gain. Self pleads for it: religion forbids it. To give up the gain for the sake of principle is self-denial. This duty will often require us, in our dealings in the world, and our conduct in the church, to give up our will and way to the will and way of others. The man who pays no respect to their opinion, wishes, and will, but who says within himself, "I will have my way," and who cares not how many he opposes or distresses or tramples upon, or what mischief he occasions by his obstinacy, has not a particle of self-denial, though he wears a hair-cloth and feeds on black bread. Self-gratification is his object and his purpose. To yield gracefully and quietly in disputed matters, where

only feeling and not principle is involved, is a difficult but a necessary act of self-denial. I am sorry to see how little of this is sometimes manifested in the government of our churches, more particularly in the choice of a pastor. How little disposed are our members to give up their personal gratification for the good of the church! Every one has a right to make and to express a preference and a choice; but if the exercise of this right involve a total disregard of the opinions, wishes, and feelings of others; if it settle into a resolute and turbulent disposition to carry a man's point at all risks; if he say or feel, "I care not what others think, I am determined to succeed in my object," what self-denial, I ask, is there here? It is the very essence of self-interest and self-gratification. Self-denial means the giving up of our individual will and purpose for the peace and well-being of the whole. Minorities should often give up their opposition for the good of the whole, and majorities should sometimes yield to minorities, when the latter are numerous and powerful. Rights are not always duties. Men who come within the bonds of any association, whether civil or sacred, should be prepared in this way to exercise self-denial. Our churches in this day are not as much disposed as they should be for a display of this Christian virtue. The deceitfulness of the human heart often imposes upon them, and leads them to suppose that they are acting for the glory of God, when they are only gratifying their selfishness and striving to have their own way.

But self-denial requires often the sacrifice of personal and relative gratification for the benefit of others and the good of Christ's cause. I have admitted that liberality is the excellence of the age in which we live.

And so it is; and I doubt not that in very many cases the most generous and heroic self-denial is practised in order to display it. I can suppose that this is especially the case among the poor, whose every penny given to the public fund is an abstraction from their very necessaries. It was self-denial on the part of the poor widow to give her two mites. So also, in the middle classes, self-denial is practised in what they give. It was self-denial on the part of the Macedonians, out of the abundance of their deep poverty, to abound in liberality; but I do not think that self-denial has yet been practised by the rich. If they give of their abundance, they have abundance left: even their very luxuries are unabridged. Their gifts have not diminished a particle of their gratification. Their cup of prosperity is full to its brim, and their donations are only its overflowings, which they cannot drink. What is wanted in order to the world's conversion, is real self-denial in the upper circles of society. We need it, and must have it, if China, Japan, and India are to be converted to Christ. It is a spirit of self-denial, abridging the luxuries of wealth, that will bring on the Millennium. When I see rich men contracting their expenditure, instead of enlarging it, I shall believe they are in earnest for the conversion of the world, and recognise in such a spirit the increasing splendour of the dawn of the latter day.

But there is another way still in which this virtue must be displayed, and that is, in sacrifices of bodily ease for the performance of duty and the promotion of personal godliness. I want to see the spirit of Howard, Clarkson, Wilberforce, and Mrs Fry, manifested in efforts to do good. We need a working spirit, as well as a giving and a praying one. A spirit to

encounter opposition and ingratitude, to endure sights and smells offensive to the senses, to bear fatigue, to suffer heat and cold, sunshine and storm, rain and snow, either for our own benefit, or the good of others. I verily believe that many professors, I am reluctant to say the bulk, are becoming too self-indulgent to endure much trouble for enjoying even the means of grace. How many of them, a cold morning, or a little rain, or a dark evening, will keep from the house of God! Is it not a general complaint in the metropolis and large towns, that the Sunday evening congregations are falling off, and the week-day services are becoming smaller and smaller? How is this? Are not many satisfying themselves with a single sermon a week, nestling at home on the Sunday evening by their firesides, and excusing themselves by reading a sermon or some other book? Where are they on prayer-meeting evenings, and other week-day services? The females at home, and the men, perhaps, unnecessarily late in business. Religion, with many, is becoming a tender plant, that can bear no exposure out of a hothouse. Oh, where is the hardihood which in days of persecution led the disciple to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ to the hillside, amidst wind and rain, for a sermon; or to grope his way amidst the darkness of night to some barn or hovel for a prayer-meeting; or to walk ten miles over the moor for a sacramental feast? We have fallen on quiet and easy times and circumstances, and they have made our religion soft and self-indulgent. What I want to see, is a robust and hardy piety, which shows its earnestness in the soldier-like quality of "enduring hardness;" which for the enjoyment of the means of grace can turn out amidst unpropitious weather, and

be regardless of distance. Men of business will, generally, on a week day, walk twice the distance which they are willing to do on a Sabbath to the sanctuary. "The morning is forbidding, stay at home;" or, "The night is dark and cold, stay at home by the fire," pleads Self-indulgence. "Give me my great coat and umbrella," says Self-denial; "my Shepherd calls me to the pasture, and I must go." A lecture is to be delivered, or a concert is to be given, or a party is to be assembled on such an evening: "Will you not have more entertainment there, than in hearing a sermon, or going to a prayer meeting?" says Self-indulgence. "Perhaps," replies Self-denial, "there may be much that is more pleasing to the flesh elsewhere, but my duty leads me to the sanctuary; I cannot allow my religious habits to be broken in upon by any secular matters." Would God we could see more of this self-denial in the churches of our own times!

I go on now to mention another of the faults of our churches in the present day, and that is an excessive regard to talent, genius, and eloquence in the ministry of the word. Ours is an age of man-worship, and idolatry of genius. The human intellect never made such advances as it has done in our times. The discoveries of science, and the inventions of art, surpass all that has ever been done in the history of the world; and these wonders are recorded even in our daily journals, with an elegance and eloquence which equal, if they do not surpass, the finest models of Greek and Roman style of composition. Hero-worship is therefore the besetting sin of the age. With the great mass, man is everything, God is nothing. Even vice can be tolerated by many, if it be only associated with genius;

and profligate libertinism borne with, if it be decked by the Muses. The prevalence and progress of such a disposition, would, by the destruction of morals, eat like a worm into the root of our national prosperity and stability. It is impossible not to know that even Christians are in peril of being corrupted in this way, and not to see that they have, in some measure, fallen into the danger. Even our evangelical reviewers are not sufficiently cautious in their critiques on works of infidel genius, or of heretical pravity. In their admiration of talent, they are sometimes too regardless of the interests of truth. In some cases, volumes containing insidious error, and volumes of sermons too, have been lauded for their genius, with scarcely an allusion to their errors. While in others, the genius has been extolled to the skies, and the heresy has been condemned with only faint censure. The worship of talent, without vigilance, and a most sacred regard to the value and importance of truth, is likely, in this day, to injure our theology.

Genius without virtue will only corrupt the world, and genius without truth will only corrupt the church. What a cry is there in our churches, in this day, about talent! And I admit, that man being an intellectual being, must appreciate it. He is made to admire it and enjoy it. The effervescence of sparkling ideas; the bright beams of genius that enlighten and elevate the understanding; the sound, deep logic that convinces the reason, together with the simple yet powerful eloquence that stirs up the soul from its very depths, must ever be delightful to the human understanding, and nothing that can be said, however eloquently, to put them down, will ever succeed. But what is to be guarded against is, exalting talent in religion, and especially in sermons, above

truth, or to the neglect of truth; I say, as I have often said elsewhere and before, the Gospel is a theme above all themes, which it is profanity for a preacher to touch with ignorance, carelessness, or feebleness; or, for a Christian, on the other hand, to hear merely for the eloquence with which it is set forth. The preacher who does not rouse all his powers to make the gospel understood, felt, and believed, is out of his place in the pulpit; and provided it be his sole aim to make his sermon "the power of God unto the salvation of his hearers," or, in other words, the means of converting sinners from the error of their ways; and provided also, there be an adaptation of his eloquence to accomplish these ends, he cannot be too eloquent. Let his genius be such as shall compel his hearers to forget him, and think only of themselves, and his powers of illustration cause them to think only the more of his subject, he cannot, I repeat, be too eloquent. This is the highest triumph of genius. This was the case with the great Athenian, whose orations left his audience no power at the time to speak or even think of Demosthenes, but compelled them to cry, "Down with Philip of Macedon."

Now, let me ask, With what views are ministers often chosen to the pastorate, and heard in the pulpit? Nay, I may go a step further back, and ask, With what views are they trained by their teachers in the college? Is not talent enshrined in the schools of the prophets, as the object of idolatry; and does not modern training tend to cherish this feeling in the minds of our students? Would I then have men of feeble intellect admitted, and dolts and ignoramuses left untrained to vegetate in indolence? No, I would have the noblest intellects for the ministry, if we could get them, and I would train

them with the most assiduous cultivation. But I would have them imbued with the idea that all the genius and acquirements in the world are only means to an end, and that end, the preaching of the gospel for the salvation of souls. When a pastor is to be chosen, how loud and how general the cry, even in small congregations, and by rustic hearers, "We must have a man of talent." Well, and let them, if talent be not considered the first thing, and something greater and better than piety and sound doctrine. Even the very demand shows the advance of the age, and of the church, in improvement. It evinces a mental culture, that is itself a matter of congratulation; ay, but then there is another side of the question, and that is, a too great regard, in the spirit of the demand, for talent alone; it is the man of gifts rather than of graces, of parts rather than of eminent piety, sound orthodoxy, and earnest zeal, that is meant. We must have men of talent; they were always wanted, and are wanted now more than ever. But we want still more, men of earnest piety and burning zeal. We want men, whose talent shall be exerted in converting souls and edifying believers, not cold intellectuality and heartless eloquence. I do not decry the demand for talent, but I want to hear a more loud and solemn demand for piety, orthodoxy, and earnestness.

And for what purpose, I ask, do Christians ordinarily go to hear sermons, and who are the preachers held in highest esteem? Is the best preacher according to their estimate, the man who can best explain the Scriptures, and make his hearers most acquainted with the Word of God; one who is most powerful in converting sinners; one who most deeply plunges into the depths

of their hearts, brings to light their corruptions, and promotes their sanctification; one who assists them to resist temptation, to be earnest in religion, to advance in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness; one who aids them in their awful probation for eternity, and enables them by faith to overcome the world? Is this the kind of preaching they call good, and love to hear, or is it the man of brilliant imagination, vivid fancy, sparkling thought, and elaborate eloquence, though at the same time little qualified to promote, and little seeking, the great ends of preaching? How, I say, do they estimate preachers? By usefulness, or by genius? Now, I will admit, that cultivated minds cannot be satisfied, (nor can any minds indeed,) with meagre, commonplace thoughts, and religious platitudes repeated a hundred times over. The most devout Christian must feel a lack there. But it is not with sound, substantial, vigorous thinking that many are satisfied, thinking that might edify the profoundest intellects, but what they want is poetic sentimentalism, or beautiful imagery, or the petty conceits of rhetoric, or curious speculations, or peculiarities mistaken for originality; all of which persons of large understandings can dispense with.

I might here ask, with what motives, ordinarily, even the great bulk of professors go to hear sermons. Is it to have God's blessed truth laid open to them for their sanctification and consolation? Is it to have the great business of working out their salvation with fear and trembling promoted? Is it, that they may grow in grace and the knowledge of God their Saviour? Is it to know more clearly, and do more perfectly, the will of God? Or, is it to have their taste gratified, and their understanding regaled? Are not sermons, with

too many, mere literary entertainments, things rather to be heard than practised; and however serious they are, and calculated to do them good, yet if they have no "fine passages," no "bursts of eloquence," no "displays of genius," do they not come away disappointed? Hear their conversation on returning from the house of God. "What a splendid sermon!" "What an intellectual treat!" Or, "We have had nothing very new to-day." "Our minister had no lofty flights in his sermon." "The sermon was good, but not very eloquent." Oh, is it thus we should hear the messages of God? But what does all this say, but that our hearers are corrupted by the spirit of the age, and are more anxious in many cases for talent than for truth. And yet the soul must be fed and nourished more by truth than by talent. We might learn on this subject something from our Quaker friends, who, on returning from worship, never criticise the addresses they have heard, but consider that what they have listened to has been given to them by the Spirit of God to practise, and not to admire or condemn. Our hearers need to be reminded that sermons are not mere essays to be heard, mere mental entertainments, or if we could make them such, mere literary feasts, but exercises which will be a "savour of life unto life, or of death unto death."

III. I come now to a consideration of the defects in the character and conduct of modern professors of religion.

The same faults, no doubt, to a certain extent, have prevailed in all periods of the Church's history, but not all of them in the same degree.

1. I first mention spirituality and heavenly-mindedness; in other words, a meditative contemplative and

devout habit of soul. The apostle tells us that, "To be spiritually-minded," or "the minding of the Spirit (that is, the things of the Spirit), is life and peace." The things of the Spirit, are the things which the Spirit reveals in the word; the influence which he exerts, the fruits and graces which he produces, and the impulses which he communicates. By minding these things we are to understand having our thoughts and affections spontaneously moved by them. There are persons who never have religious thought engaged, or devout affection moved at all. What religion they have is mere form and ceremony. There are others whose thoughts and affections are easily excited, under some external means, such as a powerful sermon, an impressive book, or heart-affecting prayers, or touching psalmody. Divine truth and spiritual realities do then, in some degree, move them, and their affections are for a season engaged. They do feel a little, sometimes, on the Sabbath, in the house of God, and under the means of grace. But when these outward appeals to their consciences cease, all their religious emotion vanishes, and on Monday they relapse into utter worldliness; eternal realities are lost sight of by them, and with the exception, perhaps, of a short and formal prayer, night and morning, they have no more religious affection than the veriest worldling. They have no spontaneous spiritual reflections rising up in their minds, no sense of the Divine presence, no aspirations of the soul after God, no ejaculatory prayer, no musings on a text of scripture, no yearnings of the heart after closer communion with Christ, no readiness or relish for pious conversation, no spiritual reflections suggested by passing events, no watchfulness over their thoughts and feelings, words and actions, not to commit

even "secret faults," no propensity to read the Scriptures, no longing for the Sabbath and the sanctuary, beyond a mere desire of bodily and mental repose, no delightful ascensions of the soul from earth to heaven, no anticipations of the full and final presence of the glory to be revealed: all of which are included in spirituality of mind. No; these things are all foreign to them. They are professors; go to church or chapel twice, perhaps, on a Sabbath; observe the Lord's supper, abstain from the theatre, and some other forbidden amusements; hold an orthodox creed; attend an evangelical ministry; subscribe to religious institutions; and are moral in their conduct, respectable in the world, and not suspected by the church. All this is good and necessary; but, with all this, where is their spiritual-mindedness, their unearthly disposition, their heavenly temper? Where is the impress of the Bible, of the Cross of Christ, of heaven, of eternity?

Spirituality means a state of mind, heart, conscience, and conduct, corresponding with those divine and eternal truths, which we have in God's book, and profess to have in our minds. It means that spontaneous, habitual, unconstrained, and fond turning of the soul towards God, Christ, salvation, heaven, and eternity, resembling, to compare religious things with secular ones, what the patriot feels towards his beloved country in a foreign and inhospitable land. He needs no stated services, prescribed means, or specific occasions, to bring his country and his home before his thoughts. O no! In sorrow and in joy; in company and alone; by night and by day; his thoughts and affections turn towards his home, and rest only when they rest there. This is spirituality, the soul longing habitually after God and

Christ, by a kind of holy instinct; looking up to heaven and on to eternity by an impulse of holy love.

Ought not this to be the case with every one who professes to be a real Christian? Is not this our profession? Is not this what is meant by the word life, when employed as descriptive of true godliness? Are not the doctrines of the gospel calculated by their nature, and intended by their design, to produce this frame of mind? Ah! but how much of dull, dormant, dead orthodoxy, is there in the bulk of modern professors! What a discordance between their creed and their practice! Why, there seems more life even among many who have departed in some measure from the standard of orthodoxy, than in multitudes of those who in theory hold fast the form of sound words. Mrs Schimmelpenninck, in her beautiful autobiography, employs the following illustration: "Some are defective in their creed, yet appear to have vitality in their practice. They resemble a person who has lost a limb, but who still is alive. While many, who are truly orthodox in their opinions, but unspiritual in their hearts, are like Egyptian mummies, retaining all their limbs and external symmetrical forms, but without life." Ah, what are some churches, but mere catacombs filled with these lifeless forms of Christian professors! Tell me not of the numerous and varied organizations of Christian zeal and liberality. I know them and rejoice in them, and wish them a more abundant support. I exult in the thought, that a spirit is up that will never rest till it has brought the world back to God. And I believe that among their supporters are found very many of eminent spirituality; but I am speaking of the bulk of professors, and of them I do not hesitate

for a moment to declare that there is an obvious and lamentable deficiency of spirituality of mind. Their religious affections are in a languid and lukewarm condition. I know that religion does not consist entirely of feeling. A religion that is all emotion is no religion at all. But so, also, a religion without emotion is no religion at all. It may be, to change the metaphor, a picture correctly drawn and well coloured, but without life; or a statue of good marble and well executed, but dead. Thus, also, sound doctrine united with correct morals, and even liberality, if it be destitute of spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, is but the picture or statue of godliness. And as, in adopting Mrs Schimmelpenninck's metaphor of the mummy, I compared some churches to catacombs; having changed the mummy for the picture and the statue, I must also express my apprehension that many churches may be compared to places, where there are effigies or likenesses of the departed as if in worship; their faces are life-like, and their attitudes of devotion are correct, but they do not pray.

Oh, professing Christians, without holy and heavenly affections what is your religion but a name? Attend then to the exhortations of the apostle, and "Set your affections on things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Cultivate a spiritual frame; acquire habits of pious thinking and feeling. Like the secret source of a spring of water, deep in the earth, yet continually welling up to the surface, and gushing out in sparkling ebullitions; let religion be in your soul, an inward source and spring of living piety, which, by its own force, is perpetually sending forth spiritual thoughts and heavenly aspirations; so

that a stream of devout thought and feeling, deep and full, is more or less continually flowing through your life. Being, moreover, assiduously fed by the act of devotional reading and regular attendance upon the means of grace, which, by secret channels, replenish the source of holy thought and feeling. This is the very figure which our Lord himself employs, when he says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." That is, the gift of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the soul, and all the other blessings of the gospel, shall produce a holy, heavenly disposition which shall be ever rising up in devout thought and feeling. It shall bubble and spring up like water in a fountain. Not like a deep well, or a stagnant pool, but like an ever-living acting fountain that plays in all seasons of the year, and in all states of the atmosphere. Such is spirituality of mind; not only outward religious decorum and works of righteousness; not only correct religious opinions; not only liberality and activity in the cause of Christ; not only regular attendance upon the means of grace: but in addition to all this, a mind prone to devout reflection, a heart warm with love to God and Christ, a soul filled with religious affections; in short, a habit of thought and feeling which interweaves piety towards God with the general texture of life. Such a man walks with God. What a force and pregnancy of meaning there are in these few words, walking with God! What can be added to heighten our conception of the devotion, the dignity, the felicity, of the Christian? It means not only harmony of thought and feeling (for "how can two walk together except they be agreed?") but it means intercourse, intimate converse

with God. This converse is mutual. God speaks to the Christian by the precious words of Scripture, and the gentle whispers of his Spirit; and he speaks to God. He is marked as a man of prayer, one who prays, in a sense, always and everywhere, who prays as he breathes. Then there is the idea of habitualness: this is the habit and tenor of his mind. We know where to find him; he is always the same; a serene steadfastness of mind in holy thought and feeling is his characteristic. Great tenderness of conscience also is his, a fear to offend God, to wound man; a desire to please God in all things, ever striving for and obtaining the testimony, that he pleases God. A peculiar intimacy obtains between God and his soul. How condescending on the part of God, that He so mingles with his creature, shows him such favours, gives him such tokens, admits him to such familiarity! All this is implied; yea, it is the very essence of the idea, they walk together, come near to one another; the most confidential communications pass, the most intimate interchange of sentiment and affection takes place. This is spirituality of mind. And this, says the apostle, is "life and peace." It is the evidence, the activity, the developement of christian life; and produces a serene and placid state of soul. It calms the perturbations of the heart; like oil on the troubled surface of the waters, it tranquillizes the tempestuous passions, and hushes the stormy billows of agitated thought to peace and quietness. It is a perpetual feast to the soul which is happy enough to possess it. Rising into heavenly-mindedness, it is an earnest and a foretaste of the bliss of Paradise. It is a draught of the river of water of life, brought by faith and hope from the crystal stream; a fruit plucked by devotion

from the Tree of Life, on which the soul delights to feast, and by which it is enabled to wait and long for the glory to be revealed. This, this, I say, is what is wanting to professing Christians, for their own comfort, the credit of religion, and the glory of God.

2. Akin to this, and indeed, as a part of it, is the low state of family prayer and domestic religious instruction. Indeed, till very lately, and I fear, even now, the spirit of prayer in general, both private and social, has sunk to a very low ebb. An almost universal complaint is made, that the social meetings for this sacred exercise are so reduced in number and in spirit, as in some places to be given up. I doubt if, taking into account the number of professors, the spirit of prayer was, in modern times, ever lower. Social prayer may, to a considerable extent, be considered a tolerably correct gauge of the measure of private prayer. If Christians, who are in health, and who have their time pretty much at their own command, and are also within a reasonable distance from the house of God, cannot find leisure and inclination to meet their fellow-Christians once a week for prayer, I am naturally led to conclude that they are sadly negligent of their daily duty morning and evening. The man who loves to pray alone has an instinctive yearning to pray with others. To a spiritual mind, the prayers of the brethren are most reviving and refreshing. There is a great power of Christian sympathy in a prayer-meeting. I am, however, somewhat hopeful that the tide of prayer has sunk to its lowest ebb, and is beginning to turn. I hear, and am delighted to hear, of prayer-meetings being held and multiplied in various parts of the kingdom. This is good, so far as it goes, but it is not so certain that

private prayer is so much increasing. Curiosity, the exhortation of ministers, the spirit of excitement, or love of novelty, may produce a crowded prayer-meeting, while there may be no proportionate attendance on the duties of the closet. They who pray much in secret, will, if opportunity allow, be as fond of social prayer; but it is not so certain that those who are fond of attending special prayer-meetings will be as fond of the prayer of the closet. It is possible that many may make increased attendance upon prayer-meetings an excuse for a decreased attention to their own private devotions. But nothing, neither activity, nor liberality, nor regular attendance at meetings for social prayer, can be any substitute for private prayer, or any compensation for the want of it. It is greatly to be feared that the urgency of business is shortening the time, and lessening the love, of private devotion. It may be well for every reader of this pamphlet to ask, how it is with him in this respect, and to take alarm, if conscious of the neglect of this sacred exercise. It has been observed, that apostacy from God begins at the closet door.

But I will now more particularly allude to the low state of family religion. I much doubt if this was ever lower or more neglected among the professors of spiritual religion, and the members of our churches. I am painfully convinced that domestic piety, maintained with systematic regularity, deep seriousness, and unvarying uniformity, is a comparatively rare thing among professing Christians of this age. Such is the absorbing power of business, the eager haste in some to be rich, and in others, the life and death struggle even to get on at all, that there is no time for family prayer. Some neglect it altogether. They never gather their children

and servants round the domestic altar: atheism governs their household. Others give it up one part of the day; others confine it to a Sabbath evening; and even of those who carry it on ordinarily both morning and evening, many reduce it to a cold, hasty and formal service, and even that often interrupted. Yes, and there are cases in which it had better be omitted altogether, unless those who conduct it would do so with more seriousness and earnestness, and make their conduct and temper throughout the day harmonise with their morning and evening prayers.

If there were no injunctions, or positive examples of, this duty in the word of God, reason and holy instinct would prompt to it. How can the father of a household expect family blessings if there be no family prayer; or in what way but this can he acknowledge family blessings? Is not this the best means, combined with instruction, to propagate religion through children to later posterity? Can any one expect his children to be pious, who does not afford them an example in this respect? Yea, is not this exercise necessary to keep alive a spirit of devotion in the parent's own soul? How blessed an effect has the morning and evening sacrifice to promote domestic peace, union, and happiness.

"Even where wisdom and regularity have done their utmost, there are often little and untoward events between parents and children, masters and servants, that may mar the happiness of all, if they are not wisely controlled by a spirit of mutual good-will and forbearance. By no other means, or by no such likely means, can this spirit of union and kindness be so effectually secured as by a due attendance at the domestic altar. Under the influence of the holy flame which burns upon it, the heart has often been softened into a forgetfulness of those little irritations, that if allowed to remain, would ripen into explosion, so far as not only to separate servant from master, but perhaps brother from brother and parent from child."

Do you object, that you cannot perform extempore prayer. Have you ever tried? If not, begin, and look up to God for help; and if, after making the experiment, you fail, adopt a form, of which there are many excellent ones to be obtained. You say, perhaps, "You have no time." What! not to ask God's blessing upon your household? Do not you find time daily to read the newspaper, to talk with your neighbours, to lie later than you need in bed? "You have apprentices and shopmen in the house, and are afraid of being ridiculed." No, they will, if the duty be well performed, respect you the more. "You expect opposition from some of your family." Are you not the head, the master, the governor? Ah, is not the neglect to be traced to another cause? Is not the secret reasoning of your soul this, "Family prayer ought to be followed with Christian consistency in all things, and I do not think my conduct through the day, in the shop and in the house, is such as will enable me, with any propriety, to assemble my family in the evening for prayer. I am afraid the practice will lay too great a restraint upon myself. And a morning prayer with my servants would not suit well with what I am going to do in the day." Is this not the case, O, professors! and can you go on in this way? Put away all excuses: begin, from the time you read this, to pray in, with, and for your families, daily, regularly, seriously, and let your whole conduct harmonise with the practice.

But family prayer, with whatever regularity, punctuality, and seriousness it may be performed, is only a part of family religion. There is the religious training of children and servants. This, I am aware, is mainly the work and duty of mothers. Still, the general

conduct of the family belongs to the husband, father, and master. A professing Christian's house should be the abode of visible, practical religion: it should be filled with an atmosphere of piety. The children should all be trained with the idea they are immortal as well as mortal beings; and, while nothing is left undone to fit them for comfort, respectability, and usefulness on earth, the chief solicitude should be to prepare them for glory, honour, and immortality, in heaven. The order of a professing Christian family should be such, in common and sacred matters, as to compel all who witness it to exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" We should look for the replenishing of our churches from the families of our congregations: and such would be the case if family religion were kept up as it should be. There are households from which scarcely one single person ever comes into the fellowship of the church; and, indeed, it would be a wonder if it were not so. Baxter is right when he says, "If family religion were kept up and conducted as it should be, the public preaching of the Gospel would cease to be the means of conversion to the members of such households; among them it would be effected by domestic instruction."

Many things in this age are against the religious order and state of our families, the want of spirituality in the members of our churches, the severe competition and absorbing power of trade, commencing so early in the morning and continuing so late in the evening; the great religious activity of the age taking off the attention of heads of families from their households to the various objects of Christian zeal, together with the frequency and late hours of committee-meetings, the

institution of ministerial Bible-classes, whereby parents too much shift the work of the instruction of their children to their pastors; the false idea that conversion is to be more expected from public preaching, than from the judicious, affectionate, and persevering teaching of domestic piety; all these causes operate to produce a lamentable neglect of true, consistent, family religion. It is high time that strenuous efforts were made to call back the heads of households to this momentous subject.

3. A third deficiency of the age amongst professors is the neglect of private reading and study of the Scriptures. A sound, healthy, and robust piety cannot be produced or maintained without an habitual and devout perusal of the Word of God. Sermons alone will not do it: they are too generally heard for intellectual gratification, rather than for their instructive, sanctifying, and general practical effect. The private conference with the Bible has none of the seductive allurements of oratory and human eloquence to divert the attention from religion as a personal and practical matter. With the Bible open before us, we seem brought face to face with God; we hear his voice speaking to us, and hear no voice but his. A single verse read, pondered, meditated upon, and applied, will sometimes do more for the soul than a sermon. Scripture truth is the sustenance of the soul, and, according to its varied contents, is milk for babes and strong meat for those of full age, and is everywhere enjoined as our spiritual food, whereby we are to grow in grace and in knowledge. Now I am seriously afraid that, except by a few persons of great leisure, and persons of constant godliness, the devout study of the Scriptures is sadly neglected. Many things

tend to this: there is, what has been so often mentioned, the hurry and urgency of business. Tradesmen tell us they can scarcely find time to read a chapter and conduct family prayer, much less for the private reading of God's word. But ought they to allow themselves to be so engrossed by business? Or, if this cannot be altered, could they not rise a little earlier in the morning, to gain time for a chapter or a few verses? A Christian man, much engaged in secular affairs, lately told me that it was his custom to read every morning before he left his chamber, and at that time, he was going through Bishop Horne's Commentary on the Psalms. And there are men who, though deeply immersed in trade, never go forth to its engagements till they have heard God speak to them from the living oracles, and who carry forth with them the recollection of what they have read to soften their toil and mitigate their anxiety. Such instances, however, are rare. I am afraid many, who keep up domestic devotion, read no more than the short Psalm which they peruse at family prayer; while others, by whom family prayer is neglected, scarcely ever read at all. What are called "Daily Portions" are, I know, with many a substitute for Bible reading: a crumb of the bread of life, thus manipulated into a small piece of spiritual confectionery, satisfies them instead of a substantial portion of the heavenly food. Magazines and serials are quite enough of religious reading for many others, who have scarcely leisure or inclination for even them, much less for the perusal of the Scriptures. How much time is consumed over the newspaper! The busiest men find leisure enough for this. Let no man say he has not time to read his Bible, who can find enough for the

daily journal. Many people seem to think, or at any rate to feel, that they can find nothing new in the Scriptures. They know, generally, all their contents: there is no charm of novelty. Ah, what a mistake! A devout mind, studying the Scriptures through a life lengthened to the age of Methuselah, would find, by close attention, some new meaning or new beauty, even to the latest hour of existence. Others, again, think the Bible an obscure book, full of dark passages, hard to be understood, and quote Peter's assertion in support of their opinion, 2 Peter iii. 16. This passage does not refer to the style of Paul's writing, as if that were obscure, but to the doctrines he taught, some of which are too sublime and vast for human comprehension, and unteachable men, whose passions blind their minds, and who have no fixed opinions or love for truth, pervert them by crude, false criticism and sophistical reasonings to their own destruction. It is not intended to discourage the private reading of the Scriptures, even by plain, unlettered people; for while there is much in them which the loftiest intellect will never fully comprehend in this world, there is also much which the plainest understanding may apprehend and apply. To borrow a well-known saying, "There are depths in which an elephant may swim, and shallows which a lamb may ford."

The Church of Christ must be feeble, and its members must be unspiritual and earthly-minded, as long as this neglect of the Scriptures prevails. In the days when she put forth her power in enduring persecution and exhibiting the glories of spiritual heroism, her members lived in perpetual study of the Bible. At the present day, the persecuted Christians of Madagascar take their Bibles with them into their retreats,

and thus become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. So it has been in every age of fierce trial. Confessors then grasp the sword of the spirit, which, by study and practice, they know how to wield, and become more than conquerors. It was with this weapon that our Lord himself, in his temptations in the wilderness, overcame his daring assailant. Never till the Church of Christ considers it as its own duty to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Scriptures, as well as the duty of its ministers to expound and enforce them, will it prove, know, and employ its own power. It has too much considered the Bible as the preacher's text-book, and not its own. Papist-like, it hands the Bible to the minister, and leaves him to think for it. There is a sect called "The Bible Christians." There is somewhat of falsehood and arrogance in the designation, as if no other sect but theirs had the Bible, believed, or practised it. All professors of religion ought to be in reality "Bible Christians." Preaching was never intended to set aside reading. The Bible is not to be tried by the minister, but the minister by the Bible.

Perhaps there is some blame due to ministers in this matter. Sermons ought to be a great deal more biblical than they are; more full of Scripture; more replete with support and illustration from texts. The preacher's aim should be to make the hearer love the sermon for the sake of the Bible, and not the Bible for the sake of the sermon. The sermon should be a way-mark, pointing to the Bible, and sending the people on to it. And, still to employ the aid of illustration, the sermon should be as a morsel of great relish which, instead of satisfying the appetite, should make it crave

for a full meal. Essays, however theological and even orthodox, if they have little of God's own words in them, may be eloquent, and please the audience, but will not do much to increase their love to the Bible. Those are the most effectual discourses which send the hearers away as Paul's did the Bereans, to search the Scriptures, in order to see whether these things are so.

John Howe, in one part of his writings, gives the following incident:

"We may be sure," he says, "if our esteem grow less of this book, God's doth not; he doth not measure by us; and if he have the same estimate and value for it he ever had, we may fear that he will, some time or other, very terribly vindicate the neglect, contempt, and disregard of these sacred records. A little to enforce this consideration, let me relate an incident which was told me by Dr. Thomas Goodwin, when he was President of Magdalen College, Oxford. Being himself, at the time of his youth, a student at Cambridge, and having heard much of Mr Rogers, of Dedham, in Essex, he purposely took a journey from Cambridge to Dedham, to hear him preach on his lecture day; a lecture then so strangely thronged that to those who came not very early there was no possibility of getting room in that very large church. Mr Rogers was, at that time, on the subject of the Scriptures; and, in the course of the sermon, he fell into an expostulation with the people about their neglect of the Holy Book, personating God to them, and saying, 'Well, I have trusted you so long with the Bible; you have slighted it; it lies in such and such a house all covered with dust and cobwebs; you care not to look into it. Do you use my Bible so? Well, you shall have my Bible no longer.' And Mr Rogers then takes up his Bible from his cushion, and seems as if he were going away with it, and carrying it from them; but immediately turns again, and personating the people to God, falls down on his knees, cries and pleads most earnestly 'Lord, whatsoever Thou doest to us, take not thy Bible from us; kill our children, burn our houses, destroy our goods; only spare us thy Bible, only take not away thy Bible.' And then he personates God again to the people, 'Say you so? Well, I will try you a little longer, and here is my Bible for you; I will see how you will use it, whether you will love it more, whether you will value it more, whether you will observe it more, whether you will practise it more, and live more

according to it." By those actions (as the Doctor told me) he put all the congregation into such a posture as he never witnessed in any congregation before; the place was a mere Bochim, the people generally deluged, as it were, with tears: and he added, that he himself, when he got out, and was to take horse home again, was fain to hang for a quarter of an hour upon the neck of his horse weeping before he had power to mount, so strange an impression was there upon him, and generally upon the people, on having been expostulated with for the neglect of the Bible."*

4. Another thing in which our modern churches are very deficient is the exercise of brotherly love. It need scarcely be remarked that it is God's design that his church should exhibit to a selfish, alienated, and envious world, characterized in Scripture as hateful and hating one another, the perfect contrast to itself, in a holy loving brotherhood, the home of charity, the very dwelling-place of all the kindly feelings of our nature, a true Agapemone. It was his purpose that the hearts of his people should be so knit together, that wherever, and among whomsoever, a company of believers should be found, observing and admiring spectators should

* Mr Rogers seems to have been a prototype of Whitfield, and in a less degree, of Mr Spurgeon, of Mr Dawson, among the Methodists, and of Mr Gough, the temperance orator and advocate. His preaching was to a certain extent, truly histrionic, a mixture of speaking and acting. This is an enviable talent where it is natural, and not affected or mimicked. Much of the popularity of both Whitfield and Spurgeon is to be traced up to it. When it gushes out spontaneously, and is, as in the instance before us, solemn, pathetic, and impressive, it is legitimate power of a most effective kind. Would we had more of it to move the masses to religious feeling and concern! Would that our preachers generally could throw off a little more of pulpit buckram, and let Nature flow out in her own sparkling ebullitions of chastened fancy and emotion! God forbid every pulpit should become a stage for buffoonery, mountebankship, or broad humour and farce; but a little more of such preaching as Rogers's, Whitfield's, and Spurgeon's is wanted to rouse and interest our slumbering congregations, especially those of the labouring classes.

involuntarily bear this testimony, "See how these Christians love one another!" The world never since the fall had seen such a sight as this, and it has been told, it is now to be seen in the Church of Christ; but, alas! how dimly and diminutively in our day. It ought ever to be seen, as the unmistakeable characteristic of every body of professors, their identifying badge, their distinctive mark. How much there is in our religion to produce it! God is love. Christ is incarnate love. The law is love. The Gospel is love. Heaven is love. If Christ loved us with such intense wonderful love, how great ought to be our love to one another! How those ought to love one another, all of whom Christ loves with such marvellous affection! How intent was he to make us understand and feel this! "This is my commandment," said he, "that ye love one another." He has singled out this from other precepts, and emphatically marked it as his special law. He has made it the mark of discipleship, "Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." In prospect of the cross, this was upon his mind, and in his wondrous prayer he supplicated that his people might be one, that is one in affection, as he was in the Father and the Father in him, that the world might know that the Father had sent him. Oh, this ought to convince the mind and touch the heart of every Christian, that brotherly love was designed to be the evidence of Christ's divine mission. Yes, and if this grace shone out from the church in all its beauty and glory, it would be an incontrovertible evidence of the truth of Christianity. It would appear to be so different from all the work of man and all his ability, to produce such a loving, meek, and harmonious association of human beings,

that it could be ascribed only to a divine power. Is it sufficiently considered by professing Christians that on their loving-kindness to each other depends one of the evidences of Christianity?

Nor can it escape the attention of the most superficial reader of the New Testament how much this is insisted upon by all its inspired writers. It is their constant theme. In Paul's Epistles it is interwoven with all his other topics, and the beloved apostle wrote a whole Epistle nearly, to enforce it. Love, love, love, is the reiterated theme of these heaven-directed men. For an exhibition of this love, read the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Alas, alas! that this scene should have been as transient as it was beautiful. Had it, or even a resemblance of it, been perpetuated, how different a thing would Christianity have appeared in the estimation of the world! The ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, relates of the early Christians, that when a plague prevailed in Egypt, "many of our brethren, neglecting their own health, through an excess of love, have brought upon themselves the misfortunes and maladies of others. After they had held in their arms the dying saints, after they had closed their mouths and their eyes; after they had embraced, kissed, and washed, and adorned them with their best habits, and carried them on their shoulders to the grave, they have been glad themselves to receive the same kind offices from others who have imitated their zeal and love." This might have been the imprudence of love; but, oh! was it not its manifestation?

Now let us look into our churches. How little that bears any resemblance to this do we find there! There may be affection, and kind intercourse, and friendly

visiting between certain classes and circles of the members, and this is well as far as it goes; but it is too often little else than general friendship felt, not so much on the ground of a common relationship to Christ, as on the mere fact of worshipping in the same pew and place, and being members of the same church. And then there is also the sacramental shilling for the relief of poor and sick members, which is, if not a mockery of charity, a composition and substitute for it. There may be peace in the church, where there is very little love. All may be quiescent. No roots of bitterness may be springing up to trouble the church, and yet there may be little of the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace. There may be distance, coldness, estrangements, where there is no hostility. What I want to see more of, is a ministry, loving in its spirit, attaching by its instructions, its influence, and its example, all closer to each other, often inculcating and always manifesting brotherly love; and deacons, performing their duties, not perfunctorily, carelessly, grudging their time, stinting their labour, doling out the bounty of the church with slack hands and heartless speech, but entering the habitations of their sick and poor brethren, as ministering angels, with tender sympathy and melting compassion; who by their fervent supplication and gentle words shall comfort the soul at the very time they are relieving the wants of the body; who shall be the counsellors of the perplexed, and shall, in cases of distress, not to be met by the ordinary distribution of the communion money, endeavour to raise a supplemental fund; men, in short, who shall know and feel that their vocation is compassion and active mercy. To these must be added the

richer members of the church, who shall practically, promptly, and generously seek out the cases of their poorer brethren, visit them in their abodes of sorrow, and feel it a privilege to sympathise with them in their afflictions and relieve their wants. Nor is it only in this way of visiting the sick and relieving the necessitous, that love should manifest itself, but in the way of kind recognition and gentle words, of respect and affability, of remembrance that under that garb of poverty there is one whom Christ loves and whom they ought to love for Christ's sake. And the love which makes the rich kind and condescending to the poor, will make the poor respectful to the rich, will repress all undue familiarity, all obtrusive consciousness of spiritual equality, all inordinate expectation of notice and attention, all morbid susceptibility of offence by real or supposed want of attention. In short, what is wanting in our churches is a fuller, richer, deeper sense of Christ's love to us all, producing in all a fuller, richer, deeper love to each other on that account, and the thought and feeling as we look round at a church-meeting, or at the Lord's table, upon our fellow-communicants, "all these are professedly the children of God, the redeemed of the Lamb, the subjects of the Spirit's influence. God loves them; Christ loves them; they are my brothers and sisters in the family of God, with them I am to spend my eternity; they are partakers with me of like precious faith and of the common salvation; they are all one with me in Christ." Brotherly love means a union of spirit with, and a going forth of the heart to all who are in this relationship to us; a soul full of such thoughts, views, and recognitions, and prompting to all the conduct which they may be

supposed to dictate and ensure. Is not this what is prescribed in the New Testament?

Again, I ask, is there not a lamentable deficiency of this in our churches? I am aware that in those which include a large number of members, scattered over the expanse of a large town, it is difficult, if not impossible, to have that knowledge, to manifest that recognition, and to display that affection which could be desired; but even in such cases, much more might be done for this object than is at present realized.

5. Perhaps amongst the deficiencies of our church members may be mentioned a considerable degree of ignorance on several important religious subjects. I mention first, doctrinal truth. This, if Bible reading be neglected, is easily accounted for. Even sermons, when unaccompanied by private searching the Scriptures, will not lead the hearers of them into an extensive and accurate acquaintance with the deep things of God and the Bible. I believe the great mass of our members are, as they suppose, orthodox on the divinity of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith, and regeneration. That is to say, they hold fast these articles of faith, though very many are quite unable to state or defend them. It is surprising how little Biblical knowledge and ideas many have, who nevertheless contend for the form of sound words. If asked for Scriptural proofs of the Divine authority of the New Testament, or the Divinity of the Saviour; or, if questioned on the nature and need of the Atonement; on the nature of justification, and its distinction from sanctification; on the relation of Judaism to Christianity; on the places and uses in the Christian system of good works; or on many other important religious subjects, they would not

be able to give an intelligent answer. They may be good people; they know they are sinners and Christ a Saviour; may be relying on his blood and righteousness for acceptance with God; but they are contented with the mere elements of truth, its most rudimental principles. Hence their comforts and usefulness are limited, and even their stability endangered. They are easily led away by the plausible objections of the abettors of error, and are likely to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, and the sleight of men and the cunning of those who lie in wait to deceive. The Apostle administers severe rebuke to all such in Hebrews v. vi., and also in Colossians ii. Nor can it escape notice how much in all his Epistles he insists on growth in knowledge.

May not this deficiency be accounted for in part by the want of more doctrinal preaching? Is it not possible to treat the great verities of religion in so attractive a manner as that our hearers shall be led to study them with greater attention and delight, and to understand them more clearly and comprehensively? I ask not for a body of divinity in every sermon, nor for dry controversy in any; I do not desire sermons that shall be a confession or articles of faith, but such as shall nourish up the hearers in sound doctrine. Perhaps sufficient pains are not taken with candidates for communion to indoctrinate them in divine truth. I do not of course mean that in their noviciate, or even in their after growth, they should be so many profound theologians, but surely they ought to be instructed on all fundamental points. I am inclined to think we have lost something in reference to this matter by the discontinuance of the catechetical method of instructing

children. The tendency of much of modern teaching, both in Bible classes, in Sunday schools, and, perhaps, in some measure in preaching, is to give knowledge about the Bible, rather than the knowledge of the Bible itself. I admit that even the minor facts of sacred history are all worth knowing. But the geography, the natural history, the chronology, and the narratives of revelation, however important, and important they are, cannot be put in comparison with a knowledge of the person and work of the Redeemer and the doctrines that cluster round his cross.

Another subject, on which considerable ignorance prevails, is the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, in other words, our principles as Nonconformists. Our members are far less acquainted with this subject than they are supposed to be, or ought to be. Separation in all cases should be founded on reasons for it; and especially religious separation. So much is said in the New Testament about union, love, and peace, that no man ought to secede from his brethren or fellow-professors without good and, to himself, sufficient reasons. I am afraid that many have no better, or other reasons, for entering into the communion of our churches, than attachment to the person and preaching of the pastors. It is feeling, rather than judgment or conscience, which binds them to us. Now, this is not as it ought to be. It is praiseworthy as far as it goes; for, surely, in a matter so momentous as that of the salvation of the soul, a man should join that communion of Christians amongst whom he is conscious this is most effectually secured. But to this should be added a knowledge of the principles of that system of government into the bonds of which he voluntarily enters.

My history, which is not unknown, will defend me from the imputation of wishing to transform our churches into companies of fiery, turbulent, and fanatical Dissenters. I hate bigotry in every one, and most of all in a Dissenter. My vocation I have ever felt to be one of love and peace, as well as of truth. Charity has been my theme and will be till I die, as I am sure it will be throughout eternity in heaven. I am not going in my old age, and in the near prospect of another world, to abjure the theme on which I have preached, written, and in various ways discoursed for half a century. I am a member of the Evangelical Alliance, and had much to do in its formation. I cannot, therefore, be supposed to be less a disciple of love than I ever was. Yet, with all this, I never was more a Nonconformist in principle and practice, than I am now. And I do not hesitate to say in the cool evening of life, that as our principles of Church government as Congregationalists approach nearer to those of the New Testament than any others, they ought to be better understood, and more firmly held by those who profess them, than they are; and, therefore, ought to be more diligently taught. It unfortunately happens, that we cannot defend ourselves without seeming to attack others, by impugning the system from which we secede; because the grounds and reasons of our separation are to be found in the constitution of the Established Church. Still I maintain, that it is possible so to hold and so to teach our principles as to give no just offence to the most fastidious Churchman. If our language be that of reason and not of passion, of love and not of hatred; if it be justificatory of ourselves rather than condemnatory of others; if it be controversy without its sting, and zeal without intem-

perance; if we concede to others what we claim for ourselves, that conscience and honest conviction are their guides as well as our own; if we so contend for truth that neither our love for our opponent, nor his for us, is lessened by the fray; then we may on each side go on teaching our respective sentiments, and be zealously affected for what we conceive to be a good thing. It is my decided conviction, my calm, dispassionate judgment, and I deliver it as my closing testimony, that our principles ought to be taught with more frequency, more plainness, and more earnestness than they are, and that both publicly and privately. They are Scriptural, I believe, and on that ground should be a part of our teaching. They are spiritual, and therefore stand vitally connected with the doctrines and duties of Christianity. They are on both these accounts important, and therefore ought not to be neglected. We are the only body of professing Christians who so much leave out our distinctive principles from our habitual teaching. Churchmen inculcate theirs in every form and by every means. Methodists do the same; and Roman Catholics excel all others in zeal for their church. It ill becomes us who believe we are nearest the apostolic platform of government than all others to be behind all others in our ecclesiastical teaching. In our families it ought to form a part of domestic instruction; in our schools it ought to be made a subject of information to the pupils; and in our pulpits and church meetings a theme of ministerial and pastoral teaching; but however, wherever, and whensoever taught, always with the most charitable spirit, kindly feeling, and courteous language, towards those from whom we have seen it our duty to separate. We need

not wonder that secessions are continually taking place from our body to the Church of England, if, by our rarely even alluding to our principles, we appear to attach so little importance to them. It is well and necessary to consider doctrines as infinitely more important than church government; and he who sets the latter above the former has inverted the Scriptural and natural order of things; but still the order as well as the foundation of Christ's house is something in itself, and ought to be something in our estimation.

There is yet another subject, cognate to the preceding, on which there is not all the information there should be amongst our members, and that is Popery. Doubtless, there is a general and strong abhorrence of this dreadful system, but resting, perhaps, more on its persecuting spirit and blood-stained history than on an intelligent acquaintance with its erroneous practices and blasphemous dogmas. This is not a time to repose on the lap of ignorance with reference to that system, or to be satisfied with the tragedies of "The Book of Martyrs." It is coming on to be the great question of the day. The battle of the Reformation may yet have to be fought over again. Popery is indirectly the cause of that awful conflict on which the nations of Europe are now entering; and in our own country it is pouring its influence through every channel to which it can gain access. Like Satan at the ear of Eve, in the garden of Eden, it is ever at the ear of government, suggesting, bribing, demanding, menacing, and bartering its political influence for ecclesiastical concessions. Among the people it is working its way with an energy that never tires, and a zeal that never sleeps. At such a period it does not become us to be in ignorance either

of its principles or its machinations. The apathy of the country to its encroachments is astonishing and alarming. It appears to me almost judicial, as if God had given up this Protestant land to a spirit of slumber. Let us wake from this fatal lethargy, and array ourselves against the enemy which is really invading us. We, as Protestant Dissenters, appear to me to have peculiar advantages for this combat. Our place is the van of God's sacramental host. Popery is to be slain by the sword of Christ's mouth and the brightness of his coming; and we wield no other weapon; let us, therefore, be skilful in the use of it. Let us read and study the Word of God with reference to this enemy of our faith, and let us become acquainted with some of the best works on this subject. For those who have but little time to read, the small publications of the Religious Tract Society will furnish all necessary information, and to these should be added the periodical entitled "The Bulwark; or Reformation Journal," which comes out at the low price of 2½d monthly, or 2s 6d per annum. This work, which ought to circulate by myriads, contains both facts and arguments. For those who would go deeper into the subject, I know no volume which contains a more complete exposure of the whole system than Dr. Wylie's book on the Papacy. Roman Catholics, in this country at least, are not usually wanting in the knowledge of this system. Peasants, servant-girls, and even children, have generally something to say in support of their wretched system, and surely Protestants ought to be, and easily might be, prepared to meet and overthrow their feeble arguments. Let every one thus arm himself in knowledge for the great fight of faith with the Man of sin.

It will perhaps be thought by many, that I have now said enough of the deficiencies of our churches, and they will perhaps be almost ready to look upon the exposure with feelings of regret, if not to censure it with the language of complaint. God, who sees the heart, knows that with much sorrow and solicitude I have written as I have done. It is in faithful love I have penned these pages. I have set down nothing in uncharitableness, nor in a fault-seeking spirit. I believe I have neither exaggerated nor caricatured the failings of professors, but given an honest and trustworthy account of matters as they really are. It is very probable, that many will think the picture I have drawn of the state of our churches is too darkly shaded. I wish I could think so; but with the New Testament in my hand, with our Lord's sermon on the Mount, and Paul's Epistles, open before me, as the only true standard of Christian piety, I am convinced that, if I have said too little of our excellences, I have not said too much of our faults and our deficiencies. I am not, never was, and hope I never shall be, the man to flatter professing Christians into a high opinion of themselves. I point out spots, not for the sake of exposing, but of removing them. I want to see our churches, which, it is known, speak highly of the purity of their communion, standing out before all others, invested in no ordinary degree with the beauties of holiness. I want to bring them nearer to the standard of the New Testament. At my time of life, and with my infirmities, I shall not speak long, and I feel compelled to speak boldly and plainly.

I would again remark, in order to prevent misconception and misrepresentation, that I do not intend this description of the state of the churches, as applicable

only, or specially, to those of the Congregational body, but as a representation of what is called the Christian world at large.

Gladly, before I close, do I turn back again to the first part of this pamphlet, and glance once more at the excellences of the churches. And in reference to this, I adopt the beautiful language, and happily it is as true as it is beautiful, of a writer in the "North British Review:"

"A new life has breathed upon the Churches: they feel their great mission, and they are seeking, in God's strength, to fulfil it. Activity, earnestness, self-denying, self-sacrificing love, in many hearts, are taking the place of the old langnor and apathy. Christians now feel that they have a great work to do, and they are beginning to be straitened till it is accomplished. The spirit of the good Samaritan has become incarnate in thousands of souls whose hearts bleed for the miseries of their fallen brethren, and dare not pass by on the other side. We are in the right track, and are advancing on it steadily. Much has already been done, and the train is laid for much more. May we not humbly cherish the hope, that the same Anglo-Saxon energy of our race which has proved itself victorious in every other field of battle, thus baptized with holy fire from above, may yet achieve a still nobler triumph in the far more terrible and arduous struggle against the sins and sorrows of her own people, of her own land."

The hope which this able writer cherishes for Scotland, I cherish for the world. A spirit is up, awake, and active, which if now cherished, I repeat, by the faith, the prayer, and the holiness of the churches, will never rest till it has brought back a revolted world to Christ. But let it never be forgotten that the conversion of the world, even as to the instrumentality to be employed, is so vast as to be accomplished by the church, not in the feebleness, but in the maturity of its strength. Zion is not yet prepared for this glorious achievement. She is not holy enough for such a deed. Her present suc-

cess is only proportionate to her present fitness for her work. Compared with what she did less than a century ago, her triumphs are marvels; but compared with what they will be when she has put on her strength, and is filled with the glory of the Lord, they are but the day of small things. What the churches have now to do, is not to slacken the hand of liberality, or the foot of activity, but to give fresh energy to both, by increasing the healthy action of the heart. What I now want, is to see evangelical holiness in as full development as evangelical zeal. What I call for in this pamphlet, is the amendment of the faults, and the supply of the deficiencies, which I have mentioned in it.

Let our earthly-mindedness, in all its forms, give way to the spirituality and heavenly mindedness so constantly inculcated in the New Testament, and so indentified with Christian piety; let self-denial supplant self-indulgence; let homage to genius be more subordinated to love of the truth; let the Bible be regarded as the sun that rules the day of our knowledge, and general and even sacred literature be but as the secondary light; let brotherly love take place of the coldness and supineness which too generally prevail in our churches; and let knowledge of all that concerns us as Christians, as Nonconformists and Protestants, illuminate the ignorance in which too many are wrapt; in short, instead of being too much satisfied with that social and organic religion which consists in acting with others in works of zeal, let us each seek for more of that personal godliness, which consists in adding to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity. Let the flame of our zeal be fed by the oil of our piety. Let our con-

scientiousness, spirituality, devoutness, and love, be as conspicuous as our liberality and activity. Then will the churches be fitted for their evangelical work at home, and their missionary enterprise abroad; then will they answer not only in their character, but in their influence, to the "salt of the earth and the light of the world." And whatever partial victories they now obtain in this conflict with the powers of darkness, then, and not till then, will their conquest be final and complete, and that kingdom be established in the whole earth, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

LETTERS, ADDRESSES, AND PREFACES ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

ON THE REVIVALS OF RELIGION IN AMERICA.

From the "Evangelical Magazine," for 1828.

Sir,

I am happy to observe that the subject of the American Revivals has awakened a spirit of enquiry and a deep interest in the minds of many persons, both in the metropolis and in the country. The fact is placed beyond all dispute, that the churches of the United States have, in very many instances, enjoyed a copious effusion of Divine influence, which has led to a much greater degree of spiritual religion in those who through grace had already believed, and to the conversion of multitudes from a state of moral death, to a life of righteousness. It is worthy of remark, that these "Revivals" are not confined to any particular denomination of Christians: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist churches, have all been visited by the mighty power of God. Nor does the awakening energy accompany only the stated means of grace and ordinances of religion, but is extended also to the various institutions which have been organized for the diffusion of the truth; for, in perusing the last Reports of those Societies, which I have received from America, I am convinced that much more real benefit is produced by their home operations, than by ours of a similar nature.

It has become, and very naturally, a matter of

inquiry, whether there is any peculiarity in their circumstances, by which we can in any measure account for this happy state of things. Perhaps there is.

1. The American Continents are rapidly rising into greater and greater importance in reference to all the transactions of modern and future history, and of course to all the moral interests of the human race; and may we not suppose, that in the present circumstances of the church, it is part of the Divine plan to assign a large portion of instrumentality to our Transatlantic fellow-Christians, and that he is thus giving them a special call to come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty?

2. The population of the United States is increasing so rapidly, both by the ordinary course of generation, and by emigration, that unless some very extraordinary efforts were made to supply them with the means of instruction, the people would grow up in the profoundest ignorance, and live without God in the world. The present glorious awakening is leading, in the most direct manner, to supply this deficiency. The Educational Society has determined to have never fewer than two thousand young men under a course of instruction in their different colleges for the work of the ministry, in addition, I believe, to the number already in training. One church in New York has undertaken to support the education of thirty students. Prodigious exertions are requisite to meet the wants of the vast population which must soon be called into existence. These exertions could not be looked for, but from a new and mighty impulse of religion. This impulse has been given, and the results are seen.

These remarks, however, tend rather to show the

ends which Providence has in view in these events, than to account for them by a reference to the peculiar circumstances of the United States.

1. Perhaps we shall find, so far as second causes are concerned, something in the church history of America which has a remote influence in the production of those events, of which we are now favoured to hear so much. The religion which was carried by the Puritans to New England, when they fled before the storm of persecution, was of a very decisive and vigorous kind, both as to sentiment and feeling, and it has continued to flourish without being corrupted or impaired by being in the neighbourhood of a secular establishment. The controversy which arose about the qualifications for communion, and was so ably conducted by Jonathan Edwards, had a powerful influence in calling men's attention to first principles, and reviving a spirit of inquiry about the essentials of personal godliness.

2. The state of society in America is favourable to Revivals. The nature and history of their political constitution, have produced a firmer spirit of independence, and one less disposed to yield to the authority of custom or fashion. Men not only think for themselves, but act for themselves; there is less disposition there, perhaps, to ask what their neighbours will say or think of them. And they are less trammelled than we by etiquette and a fastidious refinement, which sometimes leads us to compromise our convictions and principles, out of complaisance to others. They have a greater fearlessness of the world's sneers and the world's frown, than we have.

There are also some other things which may be considered as having a powerful influence in the order of means.

1. Revivals are coveted. The subject is under no stigma or reproach. The Christians, there, are not afraid of the charge of enthusiasm or fanaticism; nor of having their character as sober, judicious, intelligent professors, brought into peril. They have seen the thing as it is; and notwithstanding the evils that in some cases have been mixed up with what is good, and the objections which the lukewarm and the worldly have raised, from those very evils, against the whole work, they have publicly expressed their desire after these seasons of refreshing. Churches have met in their individual capacity, and several have met in conference, and have recorded and announced their earnest desire of an awakening.

2. Means are taken to obtain the blessing. They do not so resolve the matter into divine sovereignty, as to make no efforts. Days of humiliation, and fasting, and prayer, are appointed; committees are selected to visit the members of the church, and converse with them on their souls' concerns; prayer meetings and conference meetings are also held with frequency, with immediate reference to the work, and everything that holy ingenuity can devise is employed to rouse the atttention of men to the concerns of their souls. It is of importance that we should be convinced of this fact, that the matter is not referred by our American brethren exclusively to divine sovereignty, but is considered as an object of pursuit in the way of human instrumentality.

3. There is a style of preaching adopted by the American Ministers, which is perhaps more pointed in its appeals to the conscience than ours. It was an expression of Mr Patton's, after hearing most of our leading ministers, "That they seemed too much to forget

that their hearers had consciences." The aim of the Americans seems to be not only to convince, but to persuade; not only to cause men to know, but to feel; or, as Mr Hall expresses it, they endeavour to make their addresses "so characteristic, that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it." Their preaching partakes, in a large measure, of an alarming tendency. Dr. Dwight affirms that this is generally the case; and Jonathan Edwards's sermons are striking proofs of it.

4. But perhaps still more is to be attributed to their private intercourse with their people. They follow up their public instructions with more of personal and direct address and interrogation. The concerns of the soul and religion are more the business of the parlour, where they insulate their friends and enter directly upon the state of their hearts. Meetings are also appointed for the express purpose of conversing with those who are under deep concern, and delivering to them words of encouragement and instruction.

5. A preparatory course is also carried on by what are called their Bible Classes; by which is meant the instruction of young people, who may have gone through the ordinary course of Sunday-school teaching; and who, for this purpose, are assembled together on the Sabbath, or in the week, to be taught the contents of the word of God. Bibles printed on the Proteusian plan, only with a greater diversity of marks and references, are used in the classes, and by them a great deal of valuable information is conveyed.

It is upon such efforts as these, that the Holy Spirit has been pleased to pour out his gracious influence in America.

A question has been started, whether such effusions of divine influence may be expected in this country. To this it may be replied, "Why should they not?" In fact, they have been enjoyed here. Scotland was favoured with them in a most remarkable degree many years since, at Cambuslang and Kilsyth. Wales has often enjoyed them. England experienced them under the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley; and why, therefore, may we not look for them again? Is the Lord's arm shortened, or his ear grown heavy? Perhaps it will be asked, what we must do? To this I answer,

Let us divest our mind of all that prejudice against the thing itself, which may have been produced by the noisy and disorderly scenes with which supposed Revivals have been attended amongst certain persons in this country. Unhappily the practices of some injudicious and ill-taught professors of religion, have brought an ill savour upon the very name of Revival. We must distinguish, however, between the thing and the abuse of it. What is a revival? The work of the Holy Spirit carried on to a greater extent than usual, in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers. Who should allow himself to look with indifference, much less with prejudice, on such a work as this?

Let us court a Revival. Let our minds be drawn to the subject. Let it engage our thoughts, our feelings, our conversation. If we would experience it, we must intensely long for it: our desires must be wrought up to a very high pitch; and, in order to this, we must be sensible that we need it.

We must then take proper steps to obtain it. The first of these is a willingness to endure the sneers and discouraging influence, not only of the world, but of

false brethren, of worldly-minded, lukewarm, fashionable professors. We must brace up our mind to endure the charge of enthusiasm, fanaticism, and affected sanctity. In most churches there are some who would think such awakenings unnecessary, and condemn all attempts to procure them as visionary. Seasons of humiliation and prayer, with fasting, should be set apart. Ministers must begin the work in their own souls; and from an experimental acquaintance with the subject, converse about it in all their private intercourse with their friends. Meetings should be appointed by them, for the purpose of conversing with those who are under religious concern. Visits should be paid by them to the houses of their flocks, to inspect the state of the souls committed to their care. And all associated bodies of Ministers and Christians throughout the kingdom, should take up the matter and assist each other.

I have been present at two meetings lately, which were specially convened to take the subject into consideration. The first was at Worcester, on the morning of a day fixed for the ordination of a missionary to Demerara. Ministers of the Wesleyan, Baptist, and Independent denominations were present, all of whom seemed to enter most deeply into the subject. Many persons belonging to Mr Redford's congregation, and to other religious bodies in the town, were also there, who appeared much interested. A great solemnity rested on the whole assembly. One young woman, a servant in a pious family, was very powerfully impressed, and it is hoped will never cease to remember with gratitude the season.

The next meeting was held in the vestry of Carrs-

lane Meeting-house, Birmingham, by the ministers assembled at the Missionary Meeting in that town. The Thursday morning of the Missionary week being unoccupied, the deacons of the church assembling in that place invited the Ministers to a breakfast in the vestry; after which, two or three hours were spent in a serious and edifying discussion of the subject, which terminated in the adoption of the following resolutions.

I. That after reading, with equal wonder and gratitude, the accounts of the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, which has been granted to many of the churches in the United States of America, we feel compelled to declare our conviction, that we much need such revivals in our British churches; and although there are some differences between our circumstances and those of our Transatlantic fellow-Christians, there seems no reason why more enlarged communications of Divine influence than we have yet received, may not be expected, if they are sought in simplicity and godly sincerity.

II. We who are now present do hereby determine to give the subject of a revival of religion in our churches the deepest and most serious attention, and to invite the minds of our flocks to it without delay.

III. That it appears to this Meeting exceedingly desirable, that a closer intercourse should take place between the British and American churches than has hitherto prevailed; and that it be recommended to our brethren in the metropolis, to consider the steps that should be taken in order to the accomplishment of this object.

J. A. James.

A PASTORAL LETTER ON THE SUBJECT OF REVIVALS IN RELIGION;

ADDRESSED PRIMARILY TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ASSEMBLING IN CARR'S LANE, BIRMINGHAM, AND SUBMITTED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF THE

INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN GENERAL.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The Author of the following Epistle intended, originally, to print it exclusively for the use of his own Flock; a circumstance which will account for the form of address which he has employed: subsequent reflection led him to conclude, that if it be adapted in any measure to do them good, it may be of service to the members of other churches. With the hope, therefore, of maintaining and guiding the public feeling, which has been so happily excited on the subject of Revivals, he now offers it to the consideration of the denomination to which he belongs.

A more extended discussion of the subject, including an historic survey of the more remarkable effusions of the Holy Spirit, and observations upon these extraordinary events, accompanied also by directions in reference to our own churches, would, at this time, be very interesting and useful; and, should no one else come forward, the Author may possibly attempt it.

December 15, 1828.

My much beloved Flock,

Who are entrusted to my pastoral care and spiritual oversight, by the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls; and whom I tenderly love in the Lord Jesus Christ, both for his dear sake and your own. It is the commendable practice of some ministers of God's holy word, to address to their people an annual epistle on New Year's Day, containing encouragements, counsels, and directions, in reference to their spiritual concerns; thus furnishing them occasionally with an epitome of their own pulpit labours, and placing it before them in a form more permanent than mere oral instruction. I regret that I have not commenced this laudable practice before; but as it is never too late to adopt a good custom, I shall begin it now.

The subject of my first epistle shall be the topic which happily has been, of late, so generally and so solemnly brought before the public attention, both from the pulpit and the press; I mean a Revival of Religion in our British Churches.

The extraordinary events which have taken place in the United States of America, as detailed both in printed accounts, and the verbal communications of Christian ministers who have visited us from the other side of the Atlantic, have produced in the minds of

many in this country, not only gratitude to Almighty God, but a sincere desire to witness a similar awakening in this land, where, indeed, as well as in the principality of Wales, the same kind of excitement has sometimes appeared.

It may be proper, before I proceed, to define and illustrate what I mean by a revival of religion, which is the more necessary, because the subject has been misrepresented and brought into some degree of reproach, by the irregularities and extravagance of well-meaning but ignorant and fanatical persons in our own country, whose procedure has been no less opposed to decorum than to religion. A revival, such as I am anxious to witness, is a state of things the most remote from noise, confusion, and tumult, and such as is most strictly conformable to the apostolic rule, "Let all things be done decently and in order." It is a rational thing, a most sober and solemn state of the Church, a state which can be described and accounted for, and which can be justified as fully accordant with the principles of revelation.

By a revival of religion, then, I mean a greater increase of true piety in those who are already sincere Christians, and a larger addition to the number of those who are truly converted to God, than we have been accustomed to witness; or, referring to the efficient cause of it, it may be defined, such an effusion of the influence of the Holy Spirit, as shall lead on those who believe in Jesus Christ, and are regenerated by Divine grace, to much higher attainments in spiritual religion, and shall at the time greatly augment the number of the righteous. That is what I mean by a revival, a great and rapid increase of true piety in our churches.

I may here illustrate my meaning by an extract from the account which the celebrated Jonathan Edwards has preserved of the work of grace carried on in the town of Northampton, in New England, under his ministry.

"Though the work was glorious, yet I was filled with concern about the effect it might have upon others. I was ready to conclude (though too rashly), that some would be hardened by it, in carelessness and looseness of life, and would take occasion from it to open their mouths in reproaches of religion; but the event was the reverse, to a wonderful degree. God made it, I suppose, the greatest occasion of awakening to others of any thing that ever came to pass in the town. The news of it seemed to be almost like a flash of lightning upon the hearts of young people all over the town, and upon many others. Those persons amongst us, who used to be farthest from seriousness, and that I most feared would make an ill improvement of it, seemed greatly to be awakened with it. Many went to talk with her concerning what she had met with, and what appeared in her seemed to be to the satisfaction of all that did so.*

"Presently, upon this, a great and unusual concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world, became universal in all parts of the town, and among people of all degrees and all ages. The noise amongst the dry bones waxed louder and louder; all other talk but about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by: all the conversation, in all companies, and upon all occasions, was upon these things only, unless so much as was necessary for people carrying on their ordinary secular business. Other discourse than of the things of religion could scarcely be tolerated in any company. The minds of the people were wonderfully taken off from the world, it was treated amongst us as a thing of very little consequence. They seemed to follow their worldly business more as a part of their duty, than from any disposition they had to it: the temptation now seemed to be, on the other hand, to neglect worldly affairs too much, and to spend too much time in the immediate exercise of religion. This was exceedingly misrepresented by reports that were spread in distant parts of the land, as though the people here had wholly thrown by all worldly business, and betook themselves entirely to reading and praying, and such like religious exercises.

* This alludes to the remarkable conversion of a young woman which had recently taken place.

"But although people did not ordinarily neglect their worldly business, yet religion was with all sorts the great concern, and the world was a thing only by the bye. The only thing in their view was to get the kingdom of heaven, and every one appeared pressing into it. The engagedness of their hearts in the great concern could not be hid, it appeared in their very countenances. It then was a dreadful thing amongst us to lie out of Christ, in danger every day of dropping into hell; and what persons' minds were intent upon was to escape for their lives, and to fly from the wrath to come. All would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls, and were wont very often to meet together in private houses for religious purposes; and such meetings, when appointed, were greatly thronged.

"There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Those who were wont to be vainest and loosest, and those who had been most disposed to think and speak slightly of vital and experimental religion, were now generally subject to great awakenings. And the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more: souls did, as it were, come in flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and delivered out of an horrible pit, and from the miry clay, and set upon a rock with a new song of praise to God in their mouths.

"This work of God, as it was carried on, and the number of the true saints multiplied, soon made a glorious alteration in the town, so that in the spring and summer following, anno 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God: it was never so full of love, nor of joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families, on account of salvation being brought unto them: parents rejoicing over their children as new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands. The goings of God were then seen in his sanctuary; God's day was a delight, and his tabernacles were amiable. Our public assemblies were then beautiful: the congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth: the assembly in general were, from time to time, in tears while the word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbours.

"Our public praises were then generally enlivened; God was then served in our psalmody, in some measure, in the beauty of holiness. It has been observable, that there has been scarce any part of divine worship, wherein good men amongst us have had grace so drawn forth, and their hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing his praises. Our congregation excelled all that ever I knew in the external part of the duty before; the men generally carrying, regularly and well, three parts of music, and the women a part by themselves; but they were evidently wont to sing with unusual elevation of heart and voice, which made the duty pleasant indeed.

"In all companies, on other days, on whatever occasions persons met together, Christ was to be heard of, and seen in the midst of them. Our young people, when they met, were wont to spend the time in talking of the excellency and dying love of Jesus Christ; the glory of the way of salvation; the wonderful, the free, and sovereign grace of God; his glorious work in the conversion of a soul; the truth and certainty of the great things of God's word; the sweetness of the views of his perfections, &c. Those amongst us who had been formerly converted were greatly enlivened, and renewed with fresh and extraordinary inomes of the Spirit of God; though some much more than others, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Many, who before had laboured under difficulties about their own state, had now their doubts removed by more satisfying experience, and more clear discoveries of God's love.

"When this work first appeared, and was so extraordinarily carried on amongst us in the winter, others round about us seemed not to know what to make of it. Many scoffed at and ridiculed it; and some compared what we called conversion, to certain distempers. But it was very observable of many who occasionally came amongst us from abroad with disregardful hearts, that what they saw here cured them of such a temper of mind. Strangers were generally surprised to find things so much beyond what they had heard, and were wont to tell others that the state of the town could not be conceived of by those who had not seen it. The notice that was taken of it by the people who came to town on occasion of the court that sat here in the beginning of March, was very observable; and those who came from the neighbourhood to our public lectures, were for the most part remarkably affected. Many who came to town, on one occasion or other, had their consciences smitten and awakened; and went home with wounded hearts, and with those impressions that never wore off till they had hopefully a saving issue; and those who before had serious thoughts, had their awakenings and convictions greatly

increased. There were many instances of persons who came from abroad on visits, or on business, who had not been long here, before, to all appearance, they were savingly wrought upon, and partook of that shower of divine blessing which God rained down here, and went home rejoicing; till at length the same work began evidently to appear, and prevail, in several other towns in the country.

"This dispensation has also appeared very extraordinary in the numbers of those to whom we have reason to hope it has had a saving effect. We have about six hundred and twenty communicants, which include almost all our adult persons. Our sacraments are eight weeks asunder; and I received into our communion about a hundred before one sacrament, fourscore of them at one time, whose appearance, when they presented themselves together to make an open profession of Christianity, was very affecting to the congregation."

"I am far from pretending to be able to determine how many have lately been the subjects of such mercy; but if I may be allowed to declare anything that appears to me probable in a thing of this nature, I hope that more than three hundred persons were converted in this town in the space of half a year, and about as many men as women."

Of the author of this account it may be observed that he was one of the last men who could be considered as a visionary enthusiast. As a divine, he was unequalled for his profundity; and as a reasoner, was so acute, that many of his treatises, especially the celebrated one on "The Freedom of the Will," may be considered as some of the finest pieces of close and dexterous argumentation in the English language.

Who can read such an account without admiration, wonder, and delight? Who that loves God and man, can help exclaiming, "O that we could witness such a scene of things as this, or anything approaching to it, amongst us?" Who is not ready to exclaim "Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon us, that we also may thus turn to thee with full purpose of heart?" We are not authorized, perhaps, to expect anything approaching to this amongst us. Northampton was only a small town, of

not two thousand inhabitants; there was a different state of things there, to what exists amongst us; there were there no religious prejudices of different denominations, no artificial habits in society; no commercial speculations; all their habits were simple, plain, and unostentatious. But to show that such things are not confined to quiet and secluded spots, where men's minds are not engrossed by the cares and competition of commerce, trade, and manufactures; or to simple and rural states of society; I may refer you to the times of Whitfield and Wesley, when religion lifted up her voice with new power, and went forth with a revived energy in the metropolis of this land, and in all its principal towns. And was it not amidst the stir, and swarming myriads, magnificence, riot, and dissipation of great cities, that Christianity commenced its career? Say not, then, that we who are the inhabitants of large manufacturing towns, and who are hemmed in on all hands by business habits, and engrossed at all times by secular cares, are forbidden to look for that renewed and increased effusion of the Holy Spirit, which would raise our minds to the more steady contemplation, and our hearts to the more rich enjoyment, of spiritual and eternal things. I will give to such a situation all its disadvantages, the distance of the minister from the flock, of the flock from each other, and of both from the house of God; I will concede that this distance and separation from each other, are impediments to that mutual excitement which mutual converse affords; but still, after all, I will contend, that this does not place us beyond the reach, or the hope, of a far greater measure of divine grace, and a greater revival in our churches, than we have yet enjoyed. He who first sent religion into towns and

cities, can keep it there; and he who keeps it there, can increase it to ever so great an extent. There are Christians in the metropolis, and in this town, and in every large place, as eminent for experimental and spiritual religion, as can be found in any nook of the land, where the din of business is never heard. We must then give up at once, all idea that our circumstances preclude the hope of an increase of our spiritual and devotional habits; such an apprehension stands in the way of our enjoying the benefit; for he that shuts the door of hope, closes the very avenue through which the blessing comes.

But here, perhaps, a question will arise, "Do we need a revival?" Rarely is the spiritual condition of any church, or in any age, such as to admit of no improvement. Religion, like every thing else, admits of indefinite progression. The most heavenly-minded man on earth is far below the spirits of the just made perfect; and the most pure and prosperous church may be, and should be, still more pure and prosperous than it is. Surely, then, it may be admitted that we have need of a revival. I do not mean that you, my dear flock, are more dull and lukewarm than other churches; I do not wish to have it thought that your state is behind that of your contemporary churches; what I mean is, that the state of all our Christian societies is such as to call loudly for attempts to promote an increase of true piety.

I am willing to admit, that, in some views of the present state of our churches, it would appear as if real religion were rapidly increasing in this age. The public spirit displayed in support of religious institutions, is a pleasing sign, and unquestionably proves that

there must be a considerable portion of real and active piety in operation. But this is a symptom which must be viewed with some discrimination. A great deal of zeal may rest upon a narrow basis of true godliness. I am afraid that only a very small part of what is now done for the cause of God, is done from right motives. The mere force of example, or the love of activity, or a selfish regard to the honour of ourselves and our denomination, will account, perhaps, for more than a moiety of what is done for the diffusion of truth. There is great danger of deluding ourselves, both as it respects the state of religion generally, and the condition of our own hearts, by merely looking at what is doing for the spread of the gospel at home and abroad. It is an easy, and a very gratifying substitution, to put zeal in the place of the severer and more self-denying duties of faith and charity. I am very far from wishing to have zeal diminished, but am anxious to have it purified and rendered more efficacious, by a larger admixture of personal religion. I would not have a shilling abstracted from the funds of Missionary, Bible, or Tract Societies; but I feel tremblingly solicitous, that piety should not droop in the shadow of these glorious associations. It is the desire of Satan to turn our very good into an occasion of evil; and to render even the instruments by which we destroy his kingdom, the indirect means of enfeebling our own strength. If our societies be an occasion of pride, vanity, and self-complacency; or if they draw off our attention from the duties of the closet, or the state of the heart, they may, by such a perversion, be made to corrupt our own minds.

I will also concede that there are other favourable signs in the present day. Religion is most undoubtedly

spreading, and I give God continual thanks for it, within the pale of the Church of England. The increase of truly pious, devoted, and laborious clergymen, is astonishing, and can be accounted for only on the ground of an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to doubt whether the preaching of so many enlightened and holy men is attended with great success. I am of opinion that a revival of a very decisive character, and to a very wide extent, is now going on in the Establishment; and that in innumerable places, the fire that burns upon her altars, sends up a flame of peculiar intensity and brightness.

Nor are there wanting, in our dissenting churches, proofs of the presence and the power of Him, who "walketh amidst the golden candlesticks." The number of our churches, as well as the numbers in them, is upon the increase. Still, however, I must express to you, my dear people, my apprehension, that the degree of our individual and personal religion is far less than what it ought to be, or what it might be. We have much cause for thankfulness, I admit, but still more cause for humiliation. Instead of looking round with complacency upon our situation, and supposing that all is well, we should look round with grief and abasement, and lament over our low estate.

Let us advert to the number of real conversions which take place amongst us; and in order to judge of these, we must take into account the means of religious instruction which are employed. Let us recollect that it is God's own truth that is preached, and that the preaching of it is God's own institute. Our ministers, generally, are men of energy; their sermons numerous, and their labour great. In addition, how much instruc-

tion is delivered in our Sunday-schools! how many Bibles and tracts are distributed! and how much conversation is held with the poor, in their own habitations! And yet, where is the proportionate result? How few of our most awakening sermons produce any permanent impression! How few are persuaded by the terrors of the Lord, or drawn by the attraction of the cross! How comparatively rare is it, for a sinner to be converted from the error of his ways, and a soul saved from death. Now and then, indeed, we do hear of such happy effects; sometimes our hearts are gladdened by the conversion of formalists or profligates: but how few are these cases, compared with the instances of neglect and indifference which prevail amongst mankind! Where do we hear of, or see anything the most distantly approaching to that general solicitude described by President Edwards, as having been exhibited at Northampton? When do your ministers tell you of anxious inquirers after salvation flocking to their houses, to be led into the way of life? When do you see twenty, thirty, fifty, new communicants coming at one time to the table of the Lord, as is frequently now the case in America? Where do we hear of that stir about eternal things, which is manifested by multitudes at once in that favoured land? Is there anything in our churches, which can be called, in the language of prophecy, "a shaking amongst the dry bones in the valley." Alas! alas! does not the stillness of death prevail over the motionless skeletons? Do not the messengers return from the scene of moral desolation, venting their lament in the words of the seer of antiquity, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Say you that we need no revival, when, on the days of the adminis-

tration of the Lord's Supper, you see the multitude rise and retire, and only the few, the very few, gather round the emblems of the Saviour's body and blood?

But I come now to the state of religion in your own hearts. Is this what it should be? Is it so lively, so vigorous, so elevated, that it needs no accession of strength? Consider, my dear flock, what our profession amounts to, what our principles are, what our creed includes. We believe that we are immortal creatures, going on to eternity, and that we shall exist through everlasting ages in torment or felicity inconceivable; that we are sinners by nature and practice against God; and as such, under the sentence of the divine law, which sentence is eternal death, an everlasting sense and endurance of the wrath of God; that we have been delivered from our state of condemnation through the sovereign, rich, and efficacious grace of God, granted to us through the mediation of Jesus Christ; that we are pardoned, and in a state of favour with Jehovah; that we are going on to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, and shall dwell for ever with Christ and his saints and angels, in glory everlasting; that we are redeemed by Jesus Christ and purified from iniquity to to be a peculiar people, zealous for good works, and designed to show forth the praise of God by the beauties of holiness. Are not these our principles and profession? Think, then, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness; how dead to the world, caring but little about its profits and losses, its pains and pleasures; how heavenly in our anticipations and aspirations; how spiritual in our thoughts and feelings; how devotional in our habits; how self-denying in all our gratifications; how fond of the Holy Scrip-

tures, and devoted to the perusal of them; how given to meditation and contemplation, to private prayer and self-communion; how devoted to communion with God, and how impressed with a sense of the unutterable, inconceivable love of Christ; how replete with love to our brethren, and benevolence to the whole family of man! Should it not be seen by others, as well as felt by ourselves, that we look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal? that our eye, our hope, our heart, are upon eternity? Ought we not to possess feelings so fervent, and to exhibit conduct so decided, as to an ordinary spectator should put on something, in his estimation, of the character of enthusiasm? Should there not be a fervid consecration of the heart to the services of religion; a settled delight in the law of God, with an abiding contrition of spirit, produced by a feeling of heinous delinquency in the sight of God, "though mellowed by an apprehension of divine mercy through Christ?"

But is this, indeed, our state, or the state of Christians in general? Do they indeed live the life of that faith, and painful mortification, and habitual restraint, and aspiring spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness, which are so often inculcated in the Word of God, as the very essence of vital and experimental Christianity? What know we in this age, when profession is easy and piety generally safe from persecution, of days spent in prayer and fasting, and nights in watchfulness; of crucifying the flesh, and wrestling with God in strong cryings and many tears? We abstain from immoralities, and public amusements, and from many private engagements which are the symbols of communion with the world; and to

these things we add an attendance upon an evangelical ministry, and the forms of domestic and private religion; and all this so far is well: but as to the real culture of the heart; the mortification of the corrupt and earthly affections of the soul; the deep sense of the love of Christ; the withdrawal of our affections from the world, to set them on things above; the high communing of our spirits with God; the blissful anticipation of an eternity to be spent with the Lord Jesus; the conflicts and the triumphs of the fight of faith; of these things, alas! we know little but the names, and are ready, in some cases, to wonder what they mean. Yet are they all continually alluded to in the Scriptures, and set forth in the experience of those of God's saints whose memoirs we so often read.

I am well convinced that the religion of the present day is a languid and feeble plant, it has run up to a great height, perhaps, under the influence of a long season of unclouded sunshine; but it wants depth and tenacity of root, strength of stem, and abundance of fruit; and that, were the wintry season and frosty nights of persecution again to return, it would droop its head, and shed its leaves, and gives full proof of its sickly and delicate constitution.

It is greatly to be feared, that in these times of peace and prosperity in the church, many have entered her gates, and joined her fellowship, who know nothing at all of spiritual religion, and whose example and spirit exert a deadening influence upon others. No fiery ordeal is now to be passed, which puts a man's sincerity to the test. "A profession of religion has ceased to be persecuted, and has even become respectable. Instead of sinking a man into ignominy, it in many cases raises

him to honour. The transforming efficacy of the Gospel is rising, as it were, from the under current of society, and beginning to appear on its glittering surface." In such a state of things, how many are with us, who are not of us! Alas! for themselves, they are the most hopeless of all characters; though in the centre of the kingdom of heaven, they are, in another sense, further from it than all others. They have mistaken membership for Christianity, a dreadful error, inasmuch as it closes all the avenues of conviction, and places a man in a situation where his salvation is all but impossible. He has been recognised as a Christian; has received, as he thinks, a certificate of personal religion from a Christian society; and now sleeps upon his heartless profession so securely, that nothing can awaken him, but the sounds of the infernal world, on which he is driven by his dreadful delusion. Such members, my dear friends, are to be found in all our churches; and they produce a deadening influence on the piety of others; and against this influence, we should be upon our guard, and most vigilantly watch.

I. But I am particularly anxious to place before you what is necessary, in order to obtain a general revival of religion among us. And we must have ever a deep conviction that we need it; for if we are satisfied with our state, and think it good enough; if, like the members of the church at Laodicea, we suppose that we are rich, and increasing in goods, and have need of nothing; we shall of course take no pains to improve. And can we doubt of this necessity? Especially can those of you doubt it; for some such, we fear, there are, who have little else of religion left them but its mere forms; who have lost the spirit of prayer, and have

almost discontinued even the exercise itself; who have no relish for the word of God; no pleasure in the public means of grace; no pious affection, no penitence, no gratitude, no love? Can you doubt the need of a revival? Are not you the strongest proofs of this necessity?

II. We must desire it; for what we do not desire, we shall not seek. We must not only desire it, but long for it, intensely long for it. The reasons for this must present themselves to our attention in a very impressive, important, and attractive form, so as to engage and deeply interest our hearts. Our own eternal salvation must appear to be closely connected with it, so that we may become anxious and alarmed about our everlasting happiness; a declining religion leads to open backsliding, and backsliding to apostasy. We should consider ourselves as in imminent danger, as likely to lose our souls, and to fall into eternal perdition, if we continue in a lukewarm state. We should be therefore led to tremble with great fear for our own safety. And if matters were not so dangerous, yet how desirable is it that we should be led on to a fuller influence, a richer enjoyment, a happier experience of divine things. How much is it to be longed for, that we should have a stronger faith, a livelier hope; that we should rejoice in the Lord always, with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; that we should go on amidst the various trials of life with a peace that passeth understanding; that we should have the spirit of adoption, the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God, the full assurance of hope; that we should daily commune with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God! How much is this to be coveted, in the

place of that poor, feeble, heartless religion, which we possess. How much is it to be desired for our own comfort; for our work as professing Christians; for our usefulness; for the glory of God! And if it be desirable for us, it is equally so for our fellow Christians. What lights, in our dark world, would our churches be, if they were composed of truly spiritual members. How would the beauties of holiness shine forth from such societies! What a moral force would they contain and exert! what notice would they attract! what prayers would ascend from them to God, and what love would go from them towards man! How much of contention would cease, and how much of charity would prevail! Then would Zion "put on her beautiful garments, and shine forth in all her loveliness, fair as the moon and bright as the sun."

And then how important is this revival for the welfare of others. How desirable is a more extended work of conversion! How precious are immortal souls! how infinitely momentous their salvation! The conviction of infidels, the reformation of profligates, the regeneration of formalists, oh, how ardently to be longed for! It is impossible to be ignorant that great numbers are perishing. Where is our compassion, where our zeal, our pity, if we are not anxious for the conversion of souls? We profess to believe, that, without repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, men must be eternally lost. And do we not see multitudes around us without these pre-requisites to salvation? Can we be indifferent to this matter? If God were to pour out his Spirit from on high, how many of these would be saved, how many of our neighbours, friends, servants, children, might

receive the gift of eternal life! What a blissful sight would it be to witness a more general concern about religion; to see men flocking to Christ, "as doves to their windows," to hear from multitudes the cry of anxious inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" to see sinners converted from the error of their ways, and their souls saved from death! Picture to yourselves, my dear friends, the scene of twenty, thirty, forty, fifty new communicants, at a time, led into the fellowship of the church; what glory to God, what happiness to man, what benefit to society, what triumphs of religion, would be the result! Look at a revival, such as President Edwards describes, and ask if it is not every way desirable.

III. We must be convinced that the blessing can come only from God; that it can only be produced by the influence of the Holy Spirit. A deep conviction of man's helplessness and dependence must be at the bottom of all we do to bring about a revival. We must be entirely persuaded of the great truth, that "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but that it is God alone who can give the increase;" that it is "God who worketh in us to will and to do according to his good pleasure." We must take up the doctrine of the necessity of divine influence to renew and sanctify the human heart, not as a mere article of faith, but as a practical principle; not as an apology for indolence, but as at once an encouragement and a stimulus to exertion, as an incitement to prayer, a basis of hope, a motive to activity. We must understand the doctrine, believe it, act upon it. All eyes, and hearts, and hopes, must go up to the Eternal Spirit, the fountain of light, and life, and love. And we must not only feel the need of

the Spirit, but the encouragement we have to ask it; we must believe that we are, in a very especial sense, under the dispensation of the Spirit; that we have the promise of the Spirit; that it is our own fault if we are not "filled with the Spirit." God, in the bestowing of this gift, is sovereign, but not arbitrary; he gives it to none because they have deserved it, therefore it is in every case unmerited; he has promised it to all who seek it aright, and therefore all may have it. If we have it not, it is because we ask not, or asking, ask amiss. In looking for the Spirit, we are not to sit down in indolence, and wait without seeking; the analogy between the material and the spiritual rain will not, in this particular, hold good. We are no where commanded to have rain, to be filled with rain; but we are commanded to have the Spirit, and to be filled with it, plainly intimating that, however mysterious the connexion, there is a connexion, in this case, between the means and the end.

But what are the means to be employed to obtain the Spirit? Some of these are to be engaged in by the churches, in their collective capacity; such as seasons of solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer, specially set apart, in addition to the ordinary times of our social devotions. If we look into the New Testament, and observe the practice of the Apostles, we shall find that special occasions led to special seasons of prayer. What is customary, generally becomes dull; formality is the usual result of stated forms; we all need something, even in reference to religion itself, to vary the sameness of regularly returning exercises. Who has not felt the need of this in application to personal religion and closet devotion, and experienced the reviving influence

of an hour, an evening, or a day, set apart for extraordinary devotion? And may it not be expected that churches should feel the same influence from such seasons? How much solemnity generally pervades such meetings! All seem called upon to humble themselves afresh before God; afresh to devote themselves to his service; and afresh to seek his blessing upon the church.

And the solemnity would be much increased by the addition of fasting. How comes it to happen, that fasting is so much neglected in modern times, as to be almost laid aside? Only because we have sunk into a religion which loves ease, and which excludes all that is self-denying and rigorous. Did not our Lord, in his sermon upon the Mount, take it for granted that his disciples did fast, though in a way less ostentatious than the Pharisees? Did he not himself fast forty days in the wilderness? Did not the Apostles frequently observe the custom? Has not the church, in every age till the present, considered it as a Christian duty? Is it not a dictate of nature, as well as a duty of religion; and thus justified by reason, as well as sanctioned by revelation? For what is fasting, and what is its design? It is a practice to be observed in seasons of solemn humiliation and confession of sin, when the soul is supposed to be so much grieved, affected, and impressed, on account of guilt, as to have little inclination for the ordinary gratifications of appetite. In great grief, such gratifications are not only unsuitable, but undesired. Who, in deep grief, is inclined to go to a feast? Fasting is intended both to express and to aid inward humiliation; it is the conformity of the state of the outward to that of the inward man; it is the

communion of the body with the soul, in the act of abasement and self-mortification. Total abstinence from all food is not necessary, for this would rather impede than aid devotion; but surely on seasons of solemn and extraordinary prayer, an abstinence from our usual and lawful indulgences of appetite is suitable and necessary. Such fasts should be observed by individuals in reference to their own personal religion, and by religious societies in their collective capacity. All churches have, in one age or another, admitted this. The Church of Rome has been followed by the Church of England; and in an earlier period of the history of dissenters it was common for their churches to practise this solemnity. The Christian Societies in America are exemplary in their observance of this custom, and why should not we? Special seasons of solemn prayer at which assembled churches unite in fervent supplication to God for the outpouring of the Spirit and the revival of religion, are singularly calculated to affect the mind with the importance of the subject, and to produce a very deep impression in reference to it. Let all the members, therefore, make a point of being present on such occasions, and let them go in the most devout and spiritual manner, as to a business of uncommon solemnity.

But still, these public meetings of the church are of themselves not sufficient to produce the desired end. If the matter stop here, little will be done. Nothing more will, in this case, result, than a mere temporary excitement and stir; a feeling which, however solemn or affecting at the time, will be but transient, and die away with the occasion during which it is wrought up. Hence many persons, aware that the excitement pro-

duced by such means seldom lasts long, consider them of no great consequence, and do not give them their attendance or encouragement. This conduct would be less unreasonable if such solemnities were designed to operate to the exclusion of all other methods, and were not intended to originate them. Their object is, in fact, not to supersede, but to lead to, individual anxiety and improvement. The church is called together to humble itself, to confess its sins, to lament its lukewarm state, and to pray for the effusion of the Spirit, in order that each individual member may thus have the subject brought home with greater effect upon his own heart and conscience by the weight and influence of the whole body. It is the expostulation and admonition of the community to every single member of it. I am afraid, and indeed jealous with a godly jealousy, lest all the present stir and solicitude should terminate in mere public meetings, and seasons of collective earnestness and prayer, without its being followed up by individuals in private.

1. Permit me, then, my dear friends, to remind you that you must seek the revival of religion generally, in the way of your own personal improvement. You must say each for himself, "I need to be revived, and must begin with myself. My religion is at a low ebb, and I am desirous, for myself, to partake of a larger measure of the Spirit's influence." We must not lose sight of ourselves in looking at the church generally. We must not forget that we are parts of the community; and that if the society be revived, it must be by the revival of its individual members. We must not be looking about, saying, "Where, and how, and when, will the work begin?" but should say, "It is to begin now, with

us, and by our increased attention to all that enters into the essence of vital godliness." In this sense of the words, we may remark, "that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Each may say, "I am an Achan who troubles the camp, or one who intercedes for the people, and blesses them." And we should each act as if the interests of the church depended upon our own spiritual condition. Yes; it is this individuality of feeling, it is this attempt of each one to seek the revival of his own piety, that will bring on the glorious awakening that we desire. And we must each seek his personal improvement, at all risks, and hazards, and costs. We should say, "O God, let my soul prosper and be in health, at all events! Improve my personal religion, my christian temper and spirit, though it be at the sacrifice of my temporal comfort. Supply my deficiencies, mortify my corruptions, increase my spirituality, and enkindle in my heart the flame of holy love, though it be necessary, in order to accomplish this purpose, to diminish my worldly ease and enjoyments." Ah! are we prepared to say this? Are we prepared to set up personal religion, as that one grand paramount concern to which all things must be brought into subjection? Do we remember what we ask for, when we ask for growth in grace, and consider that God may answer us by terrible things in righteousness?

2. If we would be revived, we must resist by faith the encroaching influence of the world, and the engrossing power of things seen and temporal. The address to the church of Laodicea would lead one to suppose that it was a place of trade; and that trade had produced riches, and riches pride, worldly-mindedness,

love of ease, indifference to divine things, and spiritual poverty. Britain, like Laodicea, is a place of trade, and trade is producing the same effects here as it did there; and if there be any people in the world, says Mr Fuller, to whom the counsel of Laodicea is applicable rather than to others, it seems to be, the churches in Britain. Most men appear inordinately intent upon the world. To be rich, or at least to be comfortable, to be reputable, to be genteel, to be fashionable, to live in larger houses, and to have finer furniture and more servants, than their fathers, seems to be the supreme anxiety of most. They must, whether they can afford it or not, vie with their neighbours in all their habits. This seems the rage of the present day; and the church of God is, in a measure, carried away by the delusion. Many seem almost without knowing it to be possessed by a grasping at things beyond their reach, and an ambitious aspiring at some undefinable point of elevation. All their time, all their attention, is absorbed, and all the vigour of their spirits is exhausted, in this panting race after the world's possessions and comforts. It is evident that, till this disposition be more subdued than it is, till our moderation be more known to all men, till we have lowered our estimate of the importance of wealth, till we have ceased thus to mind earthly things, till we have gained a greater victory over the world, or are anxious to gain it, our religion cannot be revived: it is like seed growing amidst thorns; and though a fertile shower and a warmer sun should cause it to spring afresh during a more than ordinarily genial season, yet it is still amongst thorns, which will be sure to choke the grain. I am afraid that we have not that simplicity of taste, that contentment, that moral courage to be indifferent to the

world's opinion, that sobriety of mind, that comparative unconcernedness about finery and splendour, which are necessary to prepare us for a high state of religious feeling. Let us, then, consider this matter, let us attend to the apostolic admonition, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of the Lord." The spirit of the world, and the spirit of religion, cannot dwell together in the same bosom. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," so much as treasures in heaven. Remember that "one thing is needful," and that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he hath." But if we will be rich, if we will be careful about many things, if we will be full of ambition, and covetousness, and earthly mindedness, then we cannot experience much revival in piety, and need not add hypocrisy to lukewarmness; for very little better than a hypocrite is the man who attends meetings to pray for the effusions of the Holy Spirit, and yet will not moderate his extreme anxiety after wealth.

3. If we are in a state of declension, let us inquire whether any particular cause has produced this effect, and retrace our steps. "Remember from whence thou art fallen," was the counsel delivered by our Lord to one of the ancient churches; and it was immediately added, "and repent and do thy first works." Perhaps there has been an habitual neglect of the word of God. In all declensions in the church of God, a neglect of the

Scriptures has been the root of them: on the contrary, in all seasons of revival and reformation, the Scriptures have been the grand means of their being brought about. There are several ways in which a want of proper regard to God's word is discovered; such as a neglecting to read, meditate, and pray over it; not reading it for the ends and purposes for which it was written; forming a low opinion of the importance of the truths it contains. If this be the case, and I am afraid it is very generally the case, let us seek a revival of religion by a revived attention to the Scriptures. The Bible is in great danger of being neglected for periodical publications, reports of religious institutions, fashionable poetry, popular tales, and works of even questionable propriety. The Bible is the great reformer and reviver of religion: it is the instrument which the Spirit employs. Perhaps the Bible was never less read, in comparison with the talk about it, than it is now. Our piety must breathe the air of revelation, or it cannot be invigorated. We must read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, the word of God. We must meditate more, we must read more, as upon our knees. We must read for the sake of devotion, spirituality, sanctification, comfort, and not merely for curiosity and controversy.

Perhaps we have declined in religion through neglect of private prayer; have taken the time once devoted to retirement, and given it to business, domestic comfort, or personal gratification; and have abridged the season, and lost the spirit of prayer, till our closet exercises have become mere dull, cold, heartless forms, which we observe just as we retire to rest, or rise from our bed. We no longer, probably, go into our closet "to commune with our Father who seeth in

secret." Or if we still keep up the habit of stated seasons of retirement, perhaps there is much that is wrong in our manner of performing the duty. "When we pray, do we really and earnestly desire what we ask for? Do we merely use words, or are our hearts engaged? Do we watch unto prayer, looking and waiting for an answer? Are we not apt to be less earnest in matters wherein we should take no denial, than in others wherein it becomes us to be submissive? Do we not feel languid and formal in asking for spiritual blessings, and reserve the energy of our spirits for temporal deliverances? When we pray for good things, is it always for a good end? When we confess our sins and pray to be restored, do we really lament them, and mean to forsake them? When we pray for divine direction in matters of faith or practice, are we sincerely determined to follow the dictates of God's word? Are we not greatly wanting in what may be called religious public spirit in our prayers? Do we ask blessings wholly in the name of Christ?" Now let us examine ourselves, let us look back upon our habits of prayer, and try them by these tests. If we have become slack in this duty, no wonder religion has declined in our souls; the spirit of prayer is the very essence of piety. If we would be revived, we must renew this holy and delightful exercise. We must renew the habits of communion with God. We must have our stated seasons of retirement, and regularly observe them. We must seek to have the holy fire of devotion rekindled upon the altar of the closet. We must be much in prayer, and "pray always with all prayer and supplication," and wrestle in prayer. And the great object of our prayers must be the revival

of our own religion and the religion of our church; and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon unconverted sinners in general. Day and night we must cry to God with intense earnestness for the effusion of his grace. It must be an object on which we set our hearts, and for which we breathe out our longings to Him, who alone can gratify our desires, and give us our requests.

Another circumstance, which often occasions deadness and declension in personal religion is, that of sin lying on the conscience unlamented. If there be any particular evil to which we have been addicted, and that evil is still persisted in, we may be certain that we have not lamented it sufficiently, or to any good purpose; or, if we are refraining from it merely from prudential considerations, and not from hatred of the thing itself; or, if we have accumulated much guilt upon our consciences by smaller sins, secret faults, or minor imperfections, without being affected by a spirit of penitence; or, if we remember past evils with pleasure and approbation; or do not confess, abhor, and reject them; such a state of mind as this, must necessarily weaken and enervate our graces, cut us off from communion with God, give Satan an advantage over us, and lead to habitual lukewarmness, if not to open apostacy. Tenderness of conscience, and an habitual contrition of heart, are essential to a high degree of spiritual prosperity.*

If we would have amongst us a real revival of religion, and not the mere name of one; if we are anxious that the present stir and excitement should not end in mere talk, but in a permanent improvement of the state of our churches; these things must receive our most serious attention.

* See Fuller's Works, Vol. viii. pp. 9 to 57.

4. We must remove all stumbling-blocks out of the way. The language of the prophet should be attended to, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Cast ye up, cast ye up; prepare the way, take up the stumbling-blocks out of the way of my people." Now, there are many things which, if not removed, will hinder the work that we are anxious to see going on amongst us. All contentions must cease; not only such as affect and divide the church generally, for blessed be the God of peace, my dear brethren, we have none of these; but all such as exist in private, and alienate the mind of one brother from another. Wherever two members are living in a state of enmity or estrangement, there is an obstacle to a revival. If we grieve the Holy Spirit, which we do when we indulge in anger, wrath, envy, malice, revenge; or when we cherish unkind thoughts, and use uncharitable language towards each other; this celestial guest cannot be expected to visit us with the extraordinary tokens of his presence. "The irascible passions surround the church with a sort of turbulent atmosphere than which nothing is more opposite to that calm and holy light in which the Spirit loves to dwell." "Christ," says Edwards, "appears, as it were, coming in his kingdom, which calls for great moderation in our behaviour towards all men. The awe of the Divine Majesty that appears present or approaching, should dispose us to it, and deter us from the contrary. For us to be judging one another, and behaving with bitterness and fierceness towards one another, when he who is the searcher of all hearts appears so remarkably present, is exceedingly unsuitable. Our business at such a time should be at home, searching and condemning ourselves,

and taking heed to our own behaviour. If there be glorious prosperity to the church of God approaching, those that are the most meek will have the largest share in it." It is the prevalence of a spirit of love, that will prepare us for a time of great awakening among those who know not God.

We must also put away our worldly-mindedness, our ambition, our excessive anxiety to be conformed, as far as possible, to the showy, expensive, and luxurious habits of the people of this world. We must restrain our taste for voluptuous ease, and extravagance and self-indulgence; we must give up our anxiety to be accounted fashionable and genteel: instead of which, we must, without being mean contemptible or antiquated, be simple economical and self-denying, that we may have the more to give to the cause of humanity and piety. Our calling, as Christians, is to holiness and mercy. We must aim to do good, and consider benevolence as our very vocation.

We must give up, also, our sinful shame and cowardice, our fear of the world's sneer, our dread of ridicule, our painful apprehensiveness of reproach and censure. Tenderly sensitive to everything that affects our moral character, we must be utterly indifferent to everything else. We must be content to bear the charge of fanaticism, enthusiasm, and cant. We must prepare to be thought weak-minded visionaries, and be utterly regardless of the contempt thrown on our understanding, by those who neither know us nor the Scriptures. If we would have the presence and the power of Christ amongst us, we must have his cross too; for if we are ashamed or afraid of his cross, he will not come. A real revival of religion will expose us to flippant, ignorant,

and ill-natured remark, and cowardly shame of these things will unquestionably keep away the benefits.

5. We must be very diligent in our attendance upon all the public means of grace. Our Sabbaths must be most diligently, and even anxiously, improved. Instead of satisfying ourselves with one service on the Lord's day, as is the case with many professors, we must at least go twice to the house of God; and if we have not conveniences for carrying our families thither, we must not go to such a distance from the place of worship, that in bad weather they are prevented from going at all, and in fine weather from going more than once. If our religious enjoyment and improvement be thus sacrificed to the love of the country, how can we expect the influence of the Spirit in any large measure? There is an evil creeping into, and spreading through, our religious societies, of a very serious nature, which, if it be not checked, will disappoint all our hopes of revival; I mean this practice of partial neglect of the public means of grace, this habit of going to such a distance from the house of God, as to prevent a constant and frequent attendance upon its public services. Week-day services are also, by this means, almost entirely given up by many. And there are some, who live in the neglect of these services, without even the excuse of distance for the omission. Can we expect the blessing we seek, if we do not avail ourselves of every suitable opportunity to obtain it? Is not a prayer-meeting, a week-day sermon, eminently calculated to perpetuate and keep alive the impressions produced on the Sabbath, and to maintain, amidst the urgency of worldly cares, a sense of religion upon the mind? Do we not need constantly returning admonitions, frequently repeated helps to keep up

our regard to eternal and unseen things? Let us then be found in our places, as far as a due attention to other duties will allow, on these week-day services. Let us make no voluntary engagements of pleasure or visiting for those evenings, but consider them as sacred to our souls' concerns. The Friends or Quakers, who are by no means deficient in attention to the duties of their worldly calling, spend an hour every Wednesday morning at a religious meeting, and thus redeem one of the most valuable portions of the day from the things that are seen and temporal, to devote it to the things that are unseen and eternal. In the Establishment, all cathedral churches have religious service twice every day; and morning prayers are also read in many churches every day, and in others, two days in a week, a practice founded on the supposition, that we need all possible helps to devotion from public worship, and need them during the week, as well as on the Sabbath. It is quite vain for us to look for any improvement in our habits of religious feeling, unless we are prepared to give ourselves to the means likely to produce it. We must awaken from our sleep, we must throw aside our sloth, we must employ the diligence which we observe in the man whose determination it is to be rich, for it is thus only we have any right or reason to look for a growth in grace.

6. In order to obtain this revival, as it respects the more frequent and numerous conversions of sinners, there must be a general effort to obtain it. In this great work, there is something for all to do. Here is room for all, and a demand upon all. None of the friends of Zion, whether in a public or a private situa-

tion, should stand by as idle spectators. Ministers, of course, must take the lead. It belongs to them in virtue of their office, calling, and vows. We should be tremblingly anxious to encourage and promote the work by every means in our power. We should first seek an enlarged measure of divine influence upon our own souls. We need a double portion of the Spirit of God at such a time as this. "We need to be as full of light as a glass that is held out in the sun; and with respect to love and zeal, we need to be like the angels, who are as flames of fire. The state of the times extremely requires a fulness of the divine Spirit in ministers, and we ought to give ourselves no rest till we have obtained it. And, in order to this, I think that we, above all persons, should give ourselves to fasting and prayer, both in secret and one with another." We should also promote this work in every possible way: by preaching about it; speaking of it in our church meetings; conversing with our friends in reference to it; instituting special seasons for public prayer; reading suitable accounts to our churches of revivals in other places, especially Mr Edwards's account of the work in New England, and the modern statements from America; diligently and seriously catechising the children in our congregations; appointing meetings for the encouragement and direction of persons under religious concern; and by every other means which a holy ingenuity can devise. Our responsibility, just now, is awful indeed. Our churches are in a crisis, and can we be indifferent?

The Deacons and more influential members of our churches, should come forward and give all their assistance to the work. Instead of standing by with cold

indifference or sceptical hesitation, they should do all they can in the way of ready and judicious activity. They should animate their brethren by their example, and stimulate them by their conversation. They should endeavour to be present at all meetings for prayer, and render it manifest that they attach great importance to the work.

Heads of Families should give themselves with renewed zeal to the work of domestic religion, and labour with fresh vigour to train up their children and servants in the fear of the Lord. There must be a revival in domestic piety. Family prayer must be performed with greater punctuality, constancy, fervour, and solemnity; and the fire of devotion kindled afresh upon the altar in the house, as well as in the closet.

Sunday-School Teachers must have a deeper impression of their obligations to seek the spiritual welfare of their youthful charge, a more awful sense of their accountability, and a more ardent zeal for their success. They must consider, that the salvation of the souls of the children is the highest end of their office, and leave no effort untried to accomplish it. They must be anxious to see a revival of religion in the scene of their labours, and among the objects of their solicitude. And, for their encouragement, they should be informed, that the great work which God is doing in America, may be traced up, in a great measure, to the Bible classes in the Sunday schools of the United States; and the same remark applies to the extraordinary awakenings which have taken place in Wales. Mr Charles of Bala, distinctly states this fact, in letters printed in his lately published Memoirs. If all Sunday-school

teachers were qualified for their work, and wholly devoted to its spiritual objects, a wonderful change might be looked for in the religious state of this country, through their instrumentality. They, by their instruction, prepare the children to hear the ministers of religion with greater edification.

Heads of Manufactories may do much, by discouraging vice in their establishments; by establishing libraries of suitable books, to be read by their workmen at their own homes; by encouraging their attendance upon public worship; by occasionally admonishing them to fear God; and, above all, by setting an example of all morality, piety, and Christian temper.

Servants, whether domestic or manufacturing, may admonish their fellow-servants, and labour in the way of counsel, persuasion, and admonition, to reclaim them from the ways of sin, to impress them with a sense of religion, and to save their souls from death.

The Masters and Mistresses of Boarding Schools should be anxious, not only about the mental culture, and general habits, and elegant accomplishments, of their pupils, but also about their personal religion; remembering that the souls of the children are committed to their care, as well as their bodies and their intellectual interests. Religion is too frequently lost sight of in such establishments, and the advancement of the understanding in general knowledge, alone attempted.

A revival in religion is a work which must be aimed at, then, by all. It is a concern of general interest, and must be a matter of general effort. Each one can do something; the poorest, the youngest, the most illiterate

member of our churches, has a circle of influence, and must fill it up to the uttermost. From this exertion no one can stand released. All can pray to God, and all should pray to Him, for His grace. All should make it a leading object of their prayers, to obtain the blessing of an extraordinary effusion of his Holy Spirit, upon all classes of men, upon all denominations of Christians, and upon all churches, but especially upon their own.

Permit me then, my dear friends, to call your most anxious attention to this great, comprehensive, and important subject. You have been the witnesses of my solicitude in reference to it. Following many of my brethren, I have called you to special meetings for prayer, to implore a more copious effusion of the Divine Spirit: these meetings are multiplying themselves in all parts of the country; and it is a good sign: but I am afraid that the matter will rest here; I am afraid that many will think their obligations and their efforts at an end, when they quit the prayer-meeting. I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, lest you should satisfy yourselves with these associated and public exertions, instead of impressing each one on his own soul and conscience, the desire and the determination, by God's grace, to seek after personal improvement. If this be the case, we deserve all the ridicule and contempt which the ignorance, profanity, and malignity of many, are ever ready to cast upon the professors of evangelical religion. Remember, I beseech you, that we are commanded, not only to ask and to knock, but to seek. We must combine means with prayer; efforts with dependence. We must remember that, as rational creatures, we are to use means; as feeble creatures, we are to ask for assistance. We must

live, walk, and pray, in the Spirit, as well as for the Spirit; but still we must live, walk, and pray. I am delighted to witness the present attitude of our churches: I hail this excitement about an increase of our piety; but I cannot forget that it is necessary not only to look up to heaven, from whence the blessing is to descend, but into our own hearts, and houses, and churches, where it is to be received. A revival in religion neither finds nor leaves the subjects of it in a state of indolent expectation. The first sign of its approach is increasing personal activity; the second sign of its approach is still a greater activity; and the nearer it comes, and the more fully it is possessed and enjoyed, the greater and greater is the vigour, and watchfulness, and self-denial, of individual Christians. Each one is seen stirring up himself, and then seeking to stir up his neighbour. Each begins with self-improvement, but no one ends there. There is first an awakening of personal religion, and then a bright emanation of it, in the way of ardent zeal.

I can hold out to you no hope, therefore, my dear friends, of sharing that rich blessing which God is pouring down upon the Transatlantic churches, and which he is ready to pour down upon us, unless you are prepared to gird up the loins of your mind, and to deny yourselves, and to take up the cross and to follow after Christ. It is not the feeble wish, nor the languid desire; no, nor even the fervent prayer alone, that will bring down the gracious boon from heaven, but a casting out of those things which are displeasing to God, a making room for it, so to speak, even as the Lord directed the Israelites, when he said, "Bring ye all the

tythes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

I remain,
My much esteemed and beloved Flock,
Your affectionate Friend,
And faithful Pastor,
J. A. JAMES.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE REPUBLICATION OF

DR. SPRAGUE'S LETTERS ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION

IN MR. COLLINS'S SERIES OF SELECT CHRISTIAN AUTHORS, WITH INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS.

TO THE ELDERS, DEACONS, AND MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

In conjunction with a much-esteemed brother, I have consented to introduce to the attention of Christians, on this side of the Atlantic, Dr. Sprague's important and interesting volume of Lectures and Letters, on the subject of Revivals of Religion. Mr Redford has addressed himself to the Pastors of the churches; and in a manner so impressive and heart-stirring, that it leads to the expectation, that, under the blessing of God the Spirit, the ministers of Christ will be excited to renewed zeal, in the solemn and momentous duties of their office. I have been prevailed upon to address myself to you; and I entreat your candour and forbearance, while, with affectionate earnestness I attempt to direct your attention to this confessedly important topic, and to point out in what way you may be instrumental in reviving and extending the cause of religion in these kingdoms.

This volume, together with Mr Colton's work, will

furnish abundant, and, to every unprejudiced mind, satisfactory, proof of the reality, and at the same time ample illustration of the nature, of that illustrious work of grace, which God has been for many years carrying on in the United States of America. This work can be no longer matter of reasonable doubt, but is as fully attested as any fact can be. Religion is beginning to present itself in that land with a new aspect, and to act with a new power upon the heart, conscience, and conduct, of its professors. Flowing no longer in the under currents of society merely, it is rising to the surface, and attracting the notice of many, who have hitherto disregarded, and even disputed its claims. Attempts have been made, and will be doubtless repeated, by profane or incompetent writers, to disparage the work, by representing it as the mere effervescence of excited minds; a sort of national fanaticism, during the reign of which the sober dictates of the judgment are set at nought, and the laws of decorum trampled under foot, by men of heated imaginations and ungovernable passions. The character of the people among whom this great spiritual renovation is going on, might have been sufficient to protect them from such an imputation; since, whatever may be said of some of the southern States, it may be safely affirmed of the eastern division of the Union, that there is not to be found, in any country, a more grave, sober, and dispassionate people, nor a people less likely to be led astray by the meteors of enthusiasm, than the inhabitants of the New England States. It is admitted, that, in some instances, and perhaps not a few, the work has been already injured in public opinion, by extravagances and irregularities. Yet who ought either to be much surprised, or pre-

judiced, by such occurrences? Was ever a great and good cause suffered to proceed without obstacles of this kind being thrown in its way? The more important the work is to the interests of truth and holiness, the more anxious will be the father of lies, by an unusual stretch of inventive policy, to disparage its character, and hinder its progress. God never yet did a great work, which Satan did not endeavour to mimic or defame. As he cannot stop the work of revivals, he will endeavour to push them on to extravagance, and try to defeat them, by perverting them. It is of great importance therefore, brethren, that your minds should be put upon their guard against the influence of testimony, designed and calculated to diminish your credence of the accounts which have been sent to us from the great Transatlantic republic. An erroneous opinion on the subject, received from false witnesses, will be fatal to all hopes of our ever beholding similar scenes in this country. You will not commit yourselves, you ought not to do so, to the chase of an ignis fatuus, but will be content to lie down and sleep through the dullest, coldest night of spiritual indifference that could fall upon our churches, rather than awake to the pursuit of a meteor. Hence arises the great value of the volume now submitted to your examination, and earnestly commended to your attention. It is not only testimony from the very scene of revivals, but it is testimony of a most satisfactory kind. It is collective evidence; containing the opinion of no less than nearly twenty separate witnesses; and, as these witnesses are of six different denominations of religion, they cannot be suspected of any intention to exalt and extend the fame of their own sect. It is the testimony of sober-

minded men; of men whose evidence betrays not the smallest tincture of enthusiasm; and who seem, from their letters, to be of phlegmatic, rather than of sanguine temperament. It is impartial testimony; for the witnesses, while they advocate the cause of revivals, all depose to the existence of excesses and abuses. They do not attempt to conceal their knowledge of these facts, nor do they repress their fears of still greater extravagance. And yet it is harmonious testimony, as to the existence and importance of revivals. The volume is at once an irrefragable proof of the momentous reality, and of its liability, without caution, to be abused. Every page of the book breathes the exquisite and sensitive jealousy of a tender and vigilant affection, which yearns over an endeared object, and is anxious that it should not sink in public esteem. It is the voice of enlightened zeal, pleading for the preservation of a valued scheme from the frensied inspiration of a wild enthusiasm. I consider Dr. Sprague's volume, therefore, as the most important and satisfactory testimony that has yet reached us on the subject of revivals.

And of what, dear brethren, does this testimony assure us? Of whole congregations bowed at the same moment beneath the mighty power of Divine truth, looking as with a single eye upon the realities of eternity, and feeling, as with a common emotion, the powers of the world to come; so that a thoughtless stranger, coming into the assembly, is made to feel as if, by stepping over the threshold of the house, he had passed the boundary-line between things seen and temporal and things unseen and eternal, and entered a region where though surrounded by thronging multitudes, he was left alone with God and his conscience: of scenes where

hundreds of heart-stricken, anxious inquirers after salvation, just awakened from the long deep slumber of an unregenerate state, and musing on thoughts too deep for utterance, were asking by their looks, rather than their words, what they should do to be saved: of whole churches blending their common and fervent supplications at the footstool of the divine throne, with such oneness of intense desire as caused them to feel that there was scarcely a single object in the universe to be coveted, or thought of, at that moment, but the salvation of souls: of colleges of learning, where the pursuits of literature were almost suspended for a season, by a still deeper solicitude to become wise unto salvation: of towns so filled with the power of divine truth, that all the adult population have yielded to its influence, and turned unto the Lord: of Christian churches increased in a single year to an unwonted magnitude, by the accession of hundreds to their communion: yes; of all these facts do the accounts from the United States assure us as occurring there. Happy land! Delightful state of things!

And now, brethren, I would, with great deference and affection, propose for your devout consideration, several questions arising out of this subject, and which connect it with your own situation, prospects, and obligations, as professing Christians.

1. What is the real state of religion in these kingdoms, and is the condition of our churches such as to justify and demand any special efforts to obtain a revival?

In replying to this question, I would by no means assert or insinuate, that vital godliness is at a lower ebb at the present time, than at any former period since

the Reformation. Without doubt, the most lukewarm age of our Protestant history was that which terminated when Wesley and Whitfield commenced their glorious labours. An impulse was then given, the force of which is not yet spent, and in all probability never will be, till the millennium. Religion has been gradually reviving ever since. The vast and delightful increase of truly pious clergymen in the established church, the astonishing expansion of the Wesleyan body, the progressive advance of the different denominations of evangelical Dissenters, the spirit of holy and benevolent activity, as manifested by the formation of so many religious institutions for the spread of the gospel in the world, are certainly cheering and unequivocal symptoms of a quickening influence; but this may be admitted without disproving the necessity of a still greater awakening. Revival is a comparative term: that may be a high state of vitality, as compared with a previous state of absolute death, which, however, is the languor of disease itself, when contrasted with what is enjoyed by another body, in possession of a high degree of health. Comparing the state of religion in this country with what it was, it is flourishing; compared with what it should be, considering our means and privileges, or with what it is on the other side of the Atlantic, it is low indeed. Mr Colton thus defines a revival: "It is the multiplied power of religion over a community of minds, when the Spirit of God awakens Christians to special faith and effort, and brings sinners to repentance." In other words, it means an unusual and visible display of divine grace in converting the impenitent, and raising the piety of believers to a higher elevation; an extraordinary work of God, in making the

wicked righteous, and the righteous more righteous. Examine now the state of our churches, with reference to each of these two parts of a revival. You are well acquainted with the religious condition of your different societies. Of the labours of your own pastors you are the constant witnesses, and cannot be ignorant of the results. And now let me ask you, what are those results? Are you the delighted spectators of congregations bowed under the power of the truth? Do you perceive a deep and general impression produced by the preaching of the word? Do you know of great numbers pricked to the heart, and crying out, in the agony of a wounded spirit, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Do you see ten, twenty, fifty coming forward at one time, and from time to time, to join the fellowship of the faithful? Perhaps you feel surprise at such a question, but why should you? Such things are of common occurrence in America, and have occurred in this land. Are not many of you painfully conscious of a state of religion so low, that sometimes months, and even years, pass by, without a single addition being made to the church? Do you not know that it is a very common case for the pastor and the people to lament together, under what seems to them to be an almost total suspension of converting grace? The accession of two or three to the number of communicants, is regarded as a kind of wonder, compelling many a grateful and astonished witness to exclaim, "What has God wrought!" I may be in error, but it is my opinion, that, compared with the prodigious amount of instrumentality employed in the age, the quantity of spiritual effect never was so small. Means can now be counted on no lower a scale than that of millions;

the gospel sermons preached, the Bibles circulated, the tracts distributed, the lessons taught, must all be reckoned by millions. Does the work of conversion then, I ask, keep pace with such means employed to effect it? Upon a moderate computation, fifteen or twenty thousand men of truly pious minds, and evangelical sentiments, are every Sabbath-day publishing the glad tidings of salvation in the United Kingdom, seconded by myriads of devoted Sunday-school teachers, and thousands of holy men and women, who visit the cottages of the poor with religious tracts, and for the purpose of religious conversation: now, I ask again, do you see a result proportioned to the means? Was not the preaching of the gospel far more effective when it was more rare? Remark the power which attended the sermons of Beveridge, and Romaine, and Grimshaw, within the pale of the establishment, and those of Wesley and Whitfield without it. What numbers were then converted, even hundreds under a single sermon! What multitudes flocked to the Saviour, at only a single invitation from the messenger of mercy! But where is any thing which even remotely approaches to such a state of things now? Attendance upon evangelical preaching, I am aware, is become fashionable, but with what spiritual effect? Out of the number who admire the preacher, and approve the sermon, how few believe unto salvation, or even correctly understand the doctrine! They hear the joyful sound, but do they know it? They are at ease in Zion, when they should fear lest a promise being made to them of entering into rest, they should perish through unbelief.

Take the other view of a revival, I mean an increase of piety in the souls of believers, and ask, if you need

no improvement here? I am aware of the spirit of zeal which is in active operation; but to consider this alone as a proof of a high state of religious feeling would be extremely fallacious; for not to say how small a portion of what is done, is accomplished by the professing people of God, I may inquire how much of what they do, is done from such motives as will stand the test of the scrutinizing eye of Omniscience? There is a fascination in the working of our public institutions, which throws its spell over innumerable minds, that have never yielded to the power of that very truth they are anxious to diffuse. There is in others a regard to reputation, and a submission to the compulsion of example, which will not allow them to stand back from the great moral enterprise. To ascertain the state of our religion, then, we must apply other tests than the attendance at public meetings, the amount of money-contributions to the institutions of the day, or the measure of personal services rendered to the cause of religious benevolence. These may be, and doubtless are, in many cases, the mere gratification of taste; a commutation with the conscience, in lieu of still severer and more self-denying services; or a cloud of incense to our own vanity. I would ask, what there is among you of the life of faith; of the spiritual and heavenly mind; of the victory over the world, and deadness to it; of devotional habits; of Bible meditation; of the practice of self-denial; of Christian charity; of the martyr's spirit, which never, even in minor matters, allows Christian principle to bend to expediency; of the meekness and gentleness of Christ; of the stamp of immortality; of the anticipation of eternity; and of the patient waiting for the coming of our Saviour: all of

which are enjoined in the word of God, are implied in our profession of Christianity, and have been exemplified in men of like passions with ourselves? Do we not see, almost everywhere, instead of these things, a superficial, secular, and temporizing kind of piety; a religion without any depth of feeling, any power of principle, or any distinctness of character; a cold, spiritless othodoxy, united with a heartless morality: a mere exemption from gross vice and fashionable amusements; an observance of forms and decencies, but a lamentable destitution of love, of Christian temper, and tenderness of conscience? Do I defame what is called the religious world, in thus representing its present condition? Enter the social parties of professing Christians, listen to their conversation, witness their entertainments, observe their spirit, how frivolous, how worldly, how different from what might be expected from redeemed sinners, from the heirs of immortality, from the expectants of everlasting glory! Follow them home to their domestic circle, and behold their pervading temper, how irascible, how worldly, how destitute of spirituality; witness the cold and lifeless formality, the late, hurried, irregular, and undevout seasons of their family devotions, together with the shameful neglect of the religious instruction of their children and servants! Witness the shortness and inconstancy of their times for private prayer, and think how little communion with God, how little study of the Scriptures, how little self-improvement, can be carried on during such fragments of time, snatched from the greedy and all-devouring passion of earthly-mindedness! The spirit of prayer is expiring amidst the ashes of its own dead forms, and the Bible reduced, in many houses of professing Christians, to the

degradation of a mere article of chamber-furniture, placed there for show, but not for use. Who will deny that this is but too correct a representation of modern piety; or admitting it, deny the need in which our churches stand of a revival?

II. I shall now remind you of the concern which you, as Christians, have, or ought to have, in the subject of revivals, and the obligations that lie upon you to do all in your power to promote them.

That the greatest weight of responsibility lies upon the ministers of religion, I am willing to allow; but I contend that it is not exclusively ours. Even an apostle, when writing to a body of disciples, said, "Ye also helping together, by prayer for us." As to that part of a revival which relates to the quickening of lukewarm professors, there cannot exist for a moment any doubt upon the necessity of your exerting yourselves to produce this happy change. If the church is to be revived, it must be done by interesting the church itself. It is the recruiting of your own piety, brethren, that I am now speaking of, and is this no concern of yours? You are the very persons who are to receive the inestimable blessing of the Holy Spirit, and which you, therefore, must be individually engaged to seek. Put not the subject away from yourselves, but take it home to your own bosom, for it belongs to you. Indifference on this topic, is indifference to your own spiritual and eternal welfare. If the whole body is to be renovated, it must be accomplished by a movement in each particular part. Then as to that view of the subject which relates to the conversion of sinners, by what show of argument can you attempt to prove that this is no concern of yours? In what book or chapter of the

word of God, can you find a sentiment that discharges you from all interest in this matter? Even if you were excluded from all direct instrumentality in seeking this object, if it were not permitted you to attain to the high honour of "converting a sinner from the error of his ways, saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins," still you are not released from obligation to pray for their success to whom this solemn business is intrusted. The conversion of sinners ought to be, and is, the matter of deepest interest to the unfallen inhabitants of the most distant world that God has created; they look, from their remote abodes, with the most intense solicitude to our planet, as the scene of redeeming mercy and saving grace. Is the salvation of sinners, then, nothing to you, who dwell among the saved race, who are some of them, and who are actually invited to assist in the work of saving them? O it is a grave and serious error, a practical heresy, of most fatal influence to the souls of men, that ministers only are under solemn obligations to seek the conversion of souls, and to labour for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom! It is strangely and most criminally forgotten, that the church, not merely its ministers, is put in trust with the gospel for the benefit of the world. The Spirit of Christianity is essentially a spirit of propagation; and every thing in the constitution of the church implies a principle of expansion. A church is, in fact, a Foreign and a Home Missionary Society in itself, and every member of a church is, in one sense, a missionary.

That man who does not seek the conversion of others, forgets one great purpose of his own, and suggests a serious doubt, whether indeed he be converted at all. You released from all obligation to seek a

revival of religion! you may as rationally think of your being released from an obligation to love God, honour Christ, and love your neighbour! The wish to be thought so, the remotest idea of it, virtually dissolves your connection with the church, and cuts the tie that binds you as a professor to the body of Christ. No, you must not, you dare not, delegate to us ministers, the duty and the honour of seeking a revival of religion. On the contrary, did you see us anxious to discharge you from all concern in the great work, you ought to resist the effort as an aggression upon your privileges, an usurpation of your rights. Come then, beloved brethren, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Co-operate with us in this transcendently important object. Connect yourselves more closely with the kingdom of Christ, and give your hearts and your energies more entirely to the revival and extension of religion. Roll away the reproach, that "all men seek their own things, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." What are the politics of this world to you; what the interests of literature or science to you; what the course of discovery to you; what the state of commerce to you; what the current of events, the tide of history to you; or what even those fortunes you are endeavouring to seek for yourselves or your children, to you, compared with the immortal interests involved in a genuine revival of religion?

III. An important part of the subject now remains to be considered. The means to be employed by Christians for bringing about a Revival.

It is essentially necessary, that all the members of our churches should take a deep and individual, as well as collective, interest in this subject. It belongs to

you all. There is not a single member, whether rich or poor, young or old, male or female, that should feel no concern, and take no step, to obtain this blessed quickening. Each one should take it up as his own business, and feel and act as if it depended upon himself, whether religion should flourish or languish. He should scarcely ask to whom, next to himself, this matter belonged, but consider himself as the one individual with whom it rested, whether the church were to diminish or increase; to whom all its interests were intrusted; and who should therefore cherish such a solicitude as he would scarcely fail to be the subject of, if he knew that all the instrumentality, on which its resuscitation and the conversion of the world depended, centered in himself. No one is to wait for others, but every one is to endeavour to influence others. No one is to ask where will the movement begin, but every one is to originate it in himself, if he does not find it already originated by others. The glory of God, the honour of Christ, the salvation of souls, are everybody's business; and all these are comprehended in a revival of religion.

You must ardently long for it. You must not only feel that it is your business, but that it is a transcendently important and infinitely desirable event; an event which should kindle such an ardour of hope, that the soul, by the velocity and intensity of its own desires, would be alight with a flame of hallowed and rational enthusiasm. The revival of religion is a phrase that occupies but a small space on paper, or a short time in utterance; but its results are infinite and eternal. The improvement of your own personal religion, which is, in fact, your own advance in an education for heaven and eternity; the probable salvation of your children,

the increase of your own church with all the increase of God; the benefit of your cities, towns, and villages, by large accessions to the number of their pious inhabitants; the strengthening and adorning of your country, by the multiplication of those who are its ornaments and its defence; the more liberal and extended support of all those noble institutions that are "the seeds of the millennium;" the raising up of a greater number of devoted ministers and missionaries; the more rapid extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; the wider diffusion of piety on earth, and the greater accumulation of joy in heaven, are the results of every revival in religion. Beautiful is the language employed in the report already alluded to of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States:

"Who can estimate the precious influence of these renovated churches upon the population of our country, upon present and future generations? What energy of moral power is thus imparted to the cause of truth! How many fountains of salvation are thus opened, to gladden the dry and thirsty land! The fruits of this astonishing work of grace are valuable to the church and the world, beyond all human computation. In numerous communities, the predominating influence is now consecrated to the cause of God. How many mothers have been prepared, by grace, to train up their children for the kingdom of heaven! And what a noble army of young men has renounced the honours of the world, and devoted themselves to the cause of the Redeemer! Never, until the destinies of eternity are unfolded, can be known the full amount of blessings bestowed by these dispensation of mercy."

Believers in Jesus Christ, professors of the faith of the gospel, can you look on such a picture, and feel within you no risings and workings of strong desire? What mean, insignificant, and uninteresting ideas, notwithstanding their power to inflame the imaginations of the children of this world, are the revival of trade, the

revival of letters, the revival of science, compared with the revival of religion! The warmest heart that ever glowed under the intensity of this burning thought, is cold, and the most fervid imagination that ever brightened into rapture under the illumination of this radiant vision, is dull and dark, compared with what they might be. But oh, it is melancholy to witness the indifference of the great bulk of nominal professors to this vast and momentous subject! Could we behold a tenth part of the anxiety about it that is felt and expressed in reference to a revival of trade, we should feel that vitality was becoming to circulate through the spiritual body, and that symptons of returning animation were beginning to appear. But, alas! with many there is scarcely a perceptible pulsation of desire. They have hardly life enough left to be sensible of the palsy that has smitten the frame. "What languor has fallen upon the church of God! and yet here the impulse must begin, which is to subdue the world. We need a succession of impulses. We need new baptisms of fire and of the Holy Ghost. Oh that we felt our responsibility to the world! Our coldness and deadness end not with ourselves. We propagate coldness and death. We putrify the moral atmosphere of the world." Let us shake off our apathy, let us long for a revival, and covet, with intense solicitude, a resuscitation of religion. I do not expect to see here an exact counterpart of the scenes exhibited in America; I do not approve of all the means that are there employed to produce them. But there is one thing that all must approve, and that is, the ardent desire that prevails there for this gracious renovation. The church is beginning there to take God at his word, and to enlarge her expectations and

desires to the measure of his promises. She has heard the voice of him who saith, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," and has responded, "Open ye the doors, that the King of glory may come in." And He is standing and knocking at the doors of our churches also, with all his fulness of grace, and all his treasures of wisdom, willing to come in and sup with us, if we will but invite him; but ready to depart, if we desire not his gracious presence.

We must exercise faith in the reality and attainableness of the blessing. Mr Colton has told us, "that, if we would have a revival, we must have a faith in the specific thing, not a vague general notion of we know not what. Here is the starting point, this is the means of all other means, standing in the relation of parent to the rest." We treat the subject of revivals as sinners too generally do the gospel; as something to be believed in some way, but they know not how, and by somebody else, but not by themselves. We have no intelligent appropriating faith. We hear, and read of them, but as a matter not relating to us. But why not? Is there a subject on which God has been more lavish of his promises, than the communications of his grace to them that seek his Holy Spirit? We cannot have the blessing, if we do not believe both its reality and its attainableness. Our unbelief will be fatal to our hopes; indeed, we cannot hope at all if we do not believe. This infidelity or even scepticism, on the subject, will be as the stone upon the well's mouth, which must be rolled away, before the fertilizing waters can be drawn forth. Faith, if we had it, would soon bring the blessing; for it would soon put us upon all the other means to obtain it.

We must fervently pray for a revival. General, believing, fervent, persevering prayer, would as certainly bring to us this gracious visitation, as it has done to our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic, and as it has done in every age, and every country, in which it has been tried. This is not now a new experiment, and ought never to have been considered as such. It is not a thing of uncertainty, whether God will bestow his Spirit upon an individual that asks it in faith and prayer; and what is a church but a collection of individuals? That which is true and certain to the one, cannot be false or contingent in reference to the many. But the prayer that is effectual, must be fervent and persevering. This is one striking characteristic of the American churches. They believe that the blessing may be obtained by supplication; and, therefore, they set apart days for humiliation and prayer, and continue with one accord in supplication to God. It has been thought, by some, that there is rather too much of man's contrivance in their means and plans; but is not their ultimate dependence upon God? One fact alone will teach us the importance they attach to prayer. The late excellent Mr Bruen, in writing to a friend, after giving an account of a revival which had occurred in a town he visited, makes the following remarks:

"The most interesting proof given me of the novel state of the church at such a time is, that, the minister told me, the people seemed to feel that they had but to pray; that preaching was important, but inferior to prayer: and that, if it had been announced that Dr. Chalmers was to preach in the church on a week-day afternoon, and that there was to be a prayer-meeting in the court-house, at the same time, and that it was equally right for the people to go to either place, they would have gone to the place of prayer in pre-

ference. God is ready to work any where, when his people are ready for the reception of his Holy Spirit; and, if truly prepared, we need but to ask to receive. True Prayer is always successful."

What can be more striking or impressive than this fact? This is the very spirit of prayer. But ah! how little of it have we in this country. How low is the flame of devotion sunk upon the altar of our hearts! Faith is so weak, and the spirit of supplication so feeble, that the church has ceased to be able to wrestle with God and to prevail. The necessity of divine influence for the conversion of the soul, has been, of late, not unfrequently made the subject of resolutions and speeches, on the platform at public meetings. Much has been said, and eloquently said, to recommend the theme to the devout attention of the Christian church; but there the matter has ended. The breath of eloquence has not fanned the languid flame of piety; and, indeed, as it is usually employed, it has but little adaptation to accomplish this end. It is not eloquence we want, but faith and the supplicating heart. Eloquence may move man, but prayer moves the arm of God: eloquence may procure money, but prayer will bring down the grace that money cannot purchase, and without which the greatest hoards of wealth are useless: eloquence may fill the place with the inspirations of human genius, but prayer will fill the church with the presence and the power of the great Jehovah. The believing fervent breathings of one soul, uttering its longings after revival, in the retirement of the closet, do more for the attainment of this object, than a thousand orations delivered in public, amidst the plaudits of admiring auditors. O Christians, let your closets testify, let your conscience testify, how much time you set apart to importune the

God of all grace, to pour out his Spirit upon the church and the world! The blessing is ready, but waits to be fetched from heaven by your believing prayers. When the minds of believers shall be intent upon the object, and giving utterance to their desires in vehement entreaty, they shall exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" his voice shall soon be heard in gracious response, saying, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me."

But you are not only to ask, however fervently, or knock, however importunately, at the door of mercy, for the blessing; you are also to seek for it in the diligent use of other means. As very much depends upon ministerial fidelity and devotedness, you should abound in prayer for your pastors. If apostles felt their need of the prayers of the brethren, and, in the language of affectionate entreaty, said, "Pray for us," how can it be expected that the ordinary ministers of the gospel can do without the intercessions of their people? O what force and beauty are there in St. Paul's words to the Corinthians, already quoted: "You also helping together by prayer for us!" Apostles, even with miraculous endowments, felt themselves feeble and powerless without the supplications of their own converts; and the humblest ministers of the word may be made mighty, and gloriously successful by such aid. The church has never yet tried the solemn and sublime experiment, to what a lofty height of personal devotedness and success it could raise its ministers, by the power of general and fervent prayer. Christians are almost ever in the extremes of idolizing or despising their ministers; of overvaluing great talents, or undervaluing such as, though solid, are not brilliant: and thus are in

danger of not praying for the former, as above the need, and for the latter, as below the reach, of divine power. Should you have a minister whose heart is not yet interested in the subject of revivals, what method can you adopt more likely to engage his attention, than to commend him to God by earnest, affectionate supplication? Expostulation with him may, perhaps, only offend him; but prayer for him cannot produce such an effect, and may bring the reviving influence from God upon his soul.

It is of no less consequence, that you should do everything to encourage the hearts of your ministers. In order to the bringing about of a revival, there must be the most harmonious feeling, the best understanding, and the most cordial good-will, between the pastor and his flock. Where the minister does not live in the affections of his people, or is dispirited by a want of proper attention to his ministry, or of due regard to his comfort, all hope of a renovated state of things in the church is utterly vain. It is in the calm of peace, and not in the storm of contention, in the summer season of affection, and not in the wintry frost of indifference or ill-will, that a revival can be expected. It requires so much mutual confidence, deliberation, and co-operation, that the most undisturbed cordiality is essential to its existence. If you would wish your ministers to promote this great work, you must take care to keep them in a state of mind that leaves them at leisure to carry it forward. You must constantly attend their ministry, and not dishearten or paralyze their zeal, by the sight of pews vacated by those who have left their own teacher, for some pulpit novelty in another place. Curiosity is a passion which should have little scope for

operation in religion, whether it relate to doctrines or to preachers. Has the stranger studied for you, prayed for you, as your own minister does continually? And let your attendance be as serious as it is constant. Take earnest heed to the things you hear, lest at any time you let them slip. A revival of religion always, or at least usually, begins by a renewed solemnity in the congregation. People listen to sermons as voices from eternity, speaking to them of eternity. There are no sleepers, no idle gazers, in such assemblies, all turn to the pulpit, as to a door opening into the unseen world, through which are partially visible the realities of heaven and hell; objects too awfully momentous to allow a spirit of trifling. You must, if you would have a revival, change your whole design and manner in hearing the word. Instead of that careless and thoughtless rush into the sanctuary, you must go from praying to hearing, and return from hearing to praying. It is shocking to think how some professors of religion treat both the preacher and his sermon. They go to the house of God, as others go to a play, for entertainment, not for improvement; and return, not to apply the discourse, but to criticise it. In the hearing of servants, children, or guests, they assail it with the shafts of ridicule, or the bolts of anger; and thus messages from the eternal God to immortal souls, on the high themes of salvation and damnation, are treated with the same jocularity and merriment, as are bestowed on the veriest trifles that float on the breeze of popular gossip. All this arises from, or is connected with, the idolatrous regard which is paid in the present age to eloquence. The public meetings, which are so common, and which have been thought so necessary for the support of our

religious institutions, whatever benefit they may have conferred upon preachers, by cultivating a more free and popular mode of address, have corrupted in some measure the taste of the people, by producing a desire after oratorical, declamatory, and elaborate harangues, instead of the more sober, solemn, and instructive method of expounding and applying the truths of revelation; while both preachers and hearers seem to be too much occupied by matters of taste and imagination, to the neglect of the more awful functions of the conscience. It is man that too many go to hear speak, and not God; it is eloquence that they want, and not the gospel; and to be entertained, but not to be sanctified, the object they seek. True it is, that it must be sound doctrine that they hear, and orthodox preachers that they follow; but it is not for the truth's sake that dwells in them, but for the musical voice, the fine imagination, or the captivating style with which the truth is announced. This must be altered; and if we would have a revival, we must come back to the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus.

It is not irrelevant to the subject to mention, the necessity of maintaining a proper scriptural discipline in our churches. The church is the temple of God, a habitation for the Spirit; and if it be defiled by the addition or retention of unholy members, the Divine Inhabitant will retire, and leave it to the finger of desolation to write upon its forsaken walls, "The glory is departed." It might have been as rationally expected, that the symbol of the divine presence would have continued to rest upon the mercy-seat, had all the impurities concomitant upon the sacrificial rites been profanely swept into the Holy of Holies, as it is to believe that a revival

of religion will take place in those churches, where there is a gross neglect of the qualifications required by Scripture of the members.

If you would enjoy a revival of religion, you must take care not to be too much engrossed by secular politics. True it is, you did not cease to be citizens when you became Christians; nor did you, when you joined yourself to the church, take the veil, like a nun when she enters the convent, and sever every tie that binds you to earth, and to earthly affairs. The church is in the world, though not of it, and is to be to you a sacred retreat, a place of refreshment and repose, where you may recruit your strength, not only to struggle for the crown of glory, but with the rough cares of time, and from which you must come forth with invigorated piety, to guide and to influence the current of human affairs. But still it must not be concealed, brethren, that these are times in which the danger lies in the extreme, not of being too little, but of being too much, involved in political pursuits. The government of the earth must not be abandoned by the saints; but oh, let the saints maintain the character and the rights of their earthly citizenship, remembering that they belong to another and a holy community, and having their conversation in heaven! You must be sometimes in the dangerous region of party politics, but remember it is to piety an infected place, a region of malaria, in which you must guard, as much as possible, your spiritual health, and from which you must escape as speedily as you can.

There is another circumstance intimately connected with the hope of a revival of religion, I mean a spirit of Christian charity towards your fellow-Christians of other

denominations. Evil omens have shown themselves of late, of a growing spirit of alienation between the evangelical part of the Church of England and the orthodox Dissenters. What may be the cause I will not venture to inquire, but merely state the fact, that instead of approximating nearer and nearer to each other, as by the identity of their "like precious faith," and common salvation, it might be expected they would do, they are continually receding to a greater distance. Alas! alas! that in the attractions of the cross, the common centre of their religious opinions and their holy sensibilities, there should be less power to unite and harmonize, than there is in their varying forms of ecclesiastical polity to produce repulsion and dissonance. Roots of bitterness have sprung up of late, with portentous rapidity, which, instead of being eradicated by the hand of a cautious zeal, have been fostered by prejudice, till they have grown to such a height, as to chill with their shadow, and to poison with their influence, the fairest flower in the garden of the Lord, the spirit of Christian charity. We can expect no revival while these things last, except it be a revival of bigotry and intolerance.

"The irascible passions," says Mr. Hall, "surround the soul with a turbulent atmosphere, than which nothing is more opposed to that calm and holy light, in which the Spirit loves to dwell. Oh! let us lay aside our mutual suspicion; let us repress our eagerness to seize and magnify differences; let us not encourage our literary organs and periodical journals to carry on a warfare of crimination and misrepresentation; let us not refer with exultation and triumph to acknowledged evils and abuses, and thus rejoice in iniquity. A truce, an everlasting truce, to such things as these, which trouble the waters, but by the foot of a demon, rather than the gentle hand of an angel; and not for healing, but disease. One of the best means, one of the first signs, of a revival, is a growing spirit of brotherly love among the different denominations of real Christians; and to

obtain this, we must "pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting."

It may be, that in some cases, a church has fallen into an unusually low state of depression and declension; its minister, discouraged and hopeless, knows not whether to remove or remain; its members, few and lukewarm, and heartless, are looking round, not for means of a revival, but for a way of escape. All is death and desolation, and the assemblies of the Sabbath are rather like the mournful gatherings of a few surviving friends round the sepulchre of one departed, than the joyous meetings of glad hearts at a feast. Such a state of things calls for immediate and solemn consideration. No ordinary means or measures will do here; the case is all but desperate. Meetings of the pastor with his deacons to inquire into the cause, should immediately take place; days of humiliation, confession, and prayer, should be forthwith appointed; and in addition to all this, it may be well to call in the aid of one or two discreet neighbouring ministers, to assist the solemnities, and endeavour to give them impression and effect, by addresses to the church and to the different classes of the congregation. Prompt, prudent, energetic measures should be adopted; it is no time merely to utter the language of complaint; the lethargy is increasing, and death is at hand.

The revival of religion in a Christian church, is, as I have already stated, a common concern; there is something for every one to feel, and something for every one to do; all can help, and each should help as much as he can. Deacons and elders, a fearful degree of responsibility lies upon you! You may never yet have considered how much the spiritual prosperity of the church

depends upon you. Next to the pastor, you rouse it to activity, or lull it to indolence; you chill or cherish its ardour; you quicken or crush its energies. Many a worldly-minded, timid, or lukewarm deacon or elder has done more to prevent a revival than his pastor, however intent upon the work, could do to promote it. Such men paralyze the zeal of their minister; they are dead weights upon his energies, and obstacles in the way of his usefulness. Their cold scepticism about the work, their heartless indifference, their groundless suspicions, their puerile fears of novelty and fanaticism, perplex and hinder the pastor, and frighten or petrify the people. Dreadful employment of official influence! Tremble at incurring such responsibility. If you have not courage or ardour enough for your station, resign it, and retire from the front rank to the rear. But what a blessing is a spiritual, warm-hearted, prudent, devoted, deacon; one who uses the office well, and is alive to every good word and work! If unhappily the pastor should be indifferent to the subject of revival, let such men bring it before him, in an affectionate and respectful manner. Great caution, I admit, is necessary in the management of an attempt so delicate and so difficult. They must be careful not to disgust by any thing like dictation, nor to weary by injudicious importunity; but still it is their solemn duty to bring the subject under the review of the pastor. On the other hand, it may be sometimes necessary for them to restrain or modify the effusions of a distempered zeal, which are poured forth by a rash and inexperienced minister, whose ardour burns with a wild and dangerous fury. But apathy, neglect, and opposition on the part of church officers, betray a state of mind

unbefitting their station, and manifest indifference to religion, contempt for the pastor, disregard to the church; a strange and guilty unconcern about the salvation of immortal souls, and fearful forgetfulness of their accountability to Christ.

The pious and spiritual members of the church, of both sexes, may be of great service, by continually looking round them, to notice any who appear to be under serious impression, to encourage them with kind sympathy, and to conduct them to the pastors; many a blossom of hopeful piety which would be otherwise lost may thus be preserved; and, by the blessing of God upon ministerial solicitude and vigilance, may be ripened into the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God. A preacher's eyes cannot be on all his hearers, especially if his congregation is large; and therefore, the eyes of the more pious of his flock should be employed for him, to observe the anxious look, and the suffused eye, which indicate the anxious inquirer, and seem to say, "What shall I do to be saved?" How eminently useful might all be in this way, and yet how few attempt it! Many would sit in selfish enjoyment, or cold formality, in their pews for months, never speaking a word of kindness, or directing a look of sympathy to the heart-stricken, weeping, agonizing soul in the very next seat. Revivals can never be expected while such apathy remains; no, never till all the piety of the church is called forth in the way of deep interest and energetic activity.

Pious and matronly females may, and should, render valuable aid to the cause of revivals, by looking after the younger of their own sex. This is a ground of usefulness which is yet almost totally unoccupied. Female

agency was far more extensively employed in the primitive churches than it is in modern times. Honourable mention is made in the New Testament of "Phebe, a servant of the church of Cenchrea, a succourer of many;" of Priscilla, "who taught the eloquent Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly," who received the thanks not only of the apostles, but of all the churches of the Gentiles;" of "those women which laboured with Paul in the gospel;" of Junia, who was of note among the apostles; of "Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured in the Lord," and of others, too numerous to mention. The order of female deaconesses, which probably once existed, has vanished from the temple of the Lord, and their ministrations have long since ceased. This is not the place to discuss the question, how far it might be necessary to revive this order; but still how much beneficial influence might pious and experienced females exert, even though they were not formally invested with the authority of office! Could they not counsel the younger women, instruct them, encourage them, pray with them, and lead them on in the ways of godliness?

How much good, also, may be done by the more experienced and instructed brethren of the church, in the way of Sabbath evening schools; into which might be gathered the senior children of the Sabbath day schools, and others, who have recently left those humble seminaries, and, in consequence of their age and circumstances, are in more danger, and in more need of guidance, than ever! Two or three such persons in a church, yea one, might render help in the work of revival, beyond calculation.

Nor ought I to omit the efficient help which might be given by the active services of well-qualified persons,

in visiting the houses of the poor, according to the plan of Christian Instruction Societies. The great mass of the poor are living in the utter neglect of religion. If they hear the gospel, it must be first preached to them at their own houses. The precious treasure must be carried to them, for they are too ignorant, and too indolent, to go forth to seek it. Christians, there are thousands of immortal creatures perishing in sin at your very doors! Souls are continually going down to the pit, from the houses on your right hand and your left! What deep commiseration has been felt, and properly felt, for the population of those towns in which the ravages of the pestilence have been unusually extensive: but oh! think of the more awful ravages of the plague of sin, which is sweeping crowds of immortal souls from your own neighbourhood into everlasting misery! Men and women and their families are continually dropping into eternal burnings, almost before your eyes! And will you not go to their houses, and entreat them to think of their soul's welfare? If you have not courage to speak, you can take a religious tract, and beg them to read it; and by exchanging it weekly, you may continually supply them with a course of religious instruction, by which they may be made wise unto salvation.

Beloved brethren, let me, in conclusion, entreat you to consider the subject, with all the deliberate attention and deep seriousness, which its momentous, its infinite, its eternal importance demands. Every sign of the times, everything in the state of the church, and everything in the condition of the world, calls upon professing Christians to rouse from their slumber, and to look around them. Even the wise virgins are asleep,

and that too amidst voices speaking to them from every quarter, and saying, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Let these heart-stirring words enter into your souls, and call you forth to spiritual activity. O that I had at command, "thoughts that glow, and words that burn!" I would turn them in a stream of impassioned eloquence upon your spirits, and endeavour to bear you away from that guilty selfishness, which has engrossed the people of God, and impel you to a combined, and vigorous, and anxious effort for the revival of lukewarm professors, and the conversion of impenitent sinners! The subject has not yet laid hold of your imagination, your heart, and your conscience; it has come near to you, but has not entered into you; it has been often the topic of conversation, but never of deep musing. Do consider the present aspect of the world. Old institutions are changing or falling around us; society is in a state of fluctuation and transformation; the dread of innovation has risen into almost a passion for it; the authority of venerated names and ancient systems has perished, and a grand struggle for the mastery is coming on, between the spirit of infidelity and the word of God. Already the foe is in the field; his forces are marshalled, and, confident in the assurance of victory, he is preparing for the attack. Shall the church of God be supine and indolent? Shall she alone be inert? Shall there be revival and energy everywhere else but there? Oh no! she must arise and gird herself for the conflict, and take to herself the whole armour of God. She

must occupy a position which will enable her to take advantage of existing circumstances, and to bend to the promotion of her interests, the changes and events which are continually occurring on the great theatre of the world. She must be more united, more spiritual, more fervent in prayer, more zealous in action; and then will she appear "bright as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." As to our own country, as well as in reference to every other, religion is the pillar of society, the parent of social order, the germ of national prosperity, and the source of national happiness.

"Without this the nation will daily become more desirous of liberty, and, at the same time, less capable of enjoying and preserving it. The majority of the population, unless religious and virtuous, must ever be wretched and discontented; and the more beautiful the theory of government which is proposed to them, the greater, in the long run, will be their disappointment; for it is impossible that the most able contrivances of man can set aside the eternal laws of God, or by the boon of an imaginary freedom to the vicious, secure that happiness and peace to the wicked, which God has reserved for the righteous." Douglas.

Every thing yet devised by the wisdom of the church for the benefit of the world, languishes for want of a revival of religion. Bible and Tract Societies have poured their streams of moral influence through the remote and desolate places of our demoralized population, but they yet appear like the "deserts and the marshes that are given to salt." We have kindled by our missionary zeal, a flame on Zion's hill, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people, Israel; but how dim is its beam, how feeble its power to illuminate the nations that sit in darkness and the region of the shadow of death! After nearly half a

century's labours, how little have we done to evangelize the globe! Is it not time to inquire into the cause of the smallness of our success? And would not inquiry convince us, that it is to be found in the languid condition of our personal religion?

And now, dear brethren, may that Divine Spirit, which on the day of Pentecost, in answer to united prayer, descended on the infant church, baptizing it with celestial fire and qualifying it for its high and holy vocation to evangelize the nations, by illuminating it with heavenly light, and adorning it with the beauties of holiness, as well as endowing it with miraculous powers, come down into your minds and hearts in all the plenitude of his gifts and graces, reviving that which is dull, cleansing that which is impure, strengthening that which is weak, uniting that which is dissevered, in order that in this way you may be prepared for a more abundant participation of all the fulness of God, and closer fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, in every thing that relates to the salvation of this lost world.

J. A. J.

November, 1832.

INTRODUCTORY PREFACE

TO A REPUBLICATION OF THE TREATISE OF

PRESIDENT EDWARDS ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

One of the most delightful signs of the present times, is, the concern which is felt by many persons, and is still spreading among ministers and their flocks, for the revival of spiritual religion. There is a visible dissatisfaction with things as they have been, and a desire loudly expressed for the more powerful and effectual ministration of the word of life at home. It is a truly delightful fact, that neither the secular agitation of the political world, the anxious competition of commerce, nor the missionary excitement of the church, has so preoccupied and engrossed the minds and hearts of Christians and their pastors, as to leave them no inclination to think of this important subject. A conviction is gaining ground, at least in the minds of ministers, (where it ought to begin,) that something more might be done and should be done for the conversion of souls in this country. Routine and formality, even in conducting orthodox ministrations, are beginning to be thought inadequate to meet the claims of perishing sinners, and the demands of Him who died for their salvation. The apostolic rule of conduct, "If by any

means I might save some," is adopted by many who, though not behind most of their brethren, are resolved upon new and untried efforts. There is a wish for a revival of religion; and such a wish is a revival begun.

Revivals are not, usually, the work of mere sovereign grace, unaccompanied or unsought by human instrumentality. We are not to sit down, and wait for the blessed visitation, without doing any thing to obtain it. It surely cannot admit of a rational doubt, whether it is proper for a church in a state of lukewarmness, to take measures, and those of a somewhat unusual kind, to remove this dulness, and to diffuse a greater degree of vital warmth. If an individual Christian finds out that the power of godliness has declined in his soul, he sets apart a day of examination, humiliation, and prayer, or at least should do so, in order that religion may be revived in his heart; and why may not a Christian church do likewise? In each case steps ought to be taken, and means used, to obtain an increase of piety. Happy would it be if both churches and their individual members, were more frequently to set apart special seasons of fasting and prayer to seek a renewed communication of divine influence.

A question naturally arises what methods of operation should be adopted to bring about a revival? In the United States of America, what by an infelicity of phrase, are called "Protracted Meetings," have been very common, and much blessed. They have been held, also, during the last two or three years, in this country, in many places with considerable effect. In this town a series of services, including early prayer meetings, ministerial conferences, and public addresses, were conducted with gratifying results; some that had been

totally indifferent to religion were awakened, and very many that had been previously impressed, but were hesitating and procrastinating, became decided. It is usual, and we adopted the plan, to employ a considerable variety of ministers in conducting these services; but I begin to think that this may be carried to an excess, and that the ends would be better answered, if fewer instruments were engaged. It savours too much of an appeal to curiosity, and of an attempt to get up what might be called an "interesting" meeting, rather than a useful one. The attention is too much diverted by so many agents, and there is too much room and incentive for comparison between the different speakers, to allow the conscience to perform its functions. I believe that a single minister who has the holy courage and strength to make the trial, and could be ably seconded by his own deacons and church might, in some cases, do the work himself; and in most others if a minister were aided by only one or two others of experience, he would do it better than if aided by many occasionally. Certainly means are wanted, not only to endeavour by an allowable novelty of effort, and extraordinary solemnity of appeal, to awaken the attention of the careless, but also to bring to decision those who have been previously the subjects of impression and conviction: and I know of nothing better than some such meetings as those to which I now refer.

There is, however, danger (and it is well to know it, and watch against it,) of both ministers and people depending more for success upon occasional, and what some might call spasmodic efforts, than upon the regular and ordinary ministrations of the word and ordinances. If extraordinary means, and seasons of excitement,

should render the stated services less interesting and less effective than usual, more harm than good, in the long run, will be done by resorting to such measures. If either pastors or their flocks should, during the intervals of revival, reconcile themselves to lukewarmness and inertness, by the idea that the season will come round when they shall again be restored to their lost ground, mischief will be done, and the very word revival will be a bane instead of a blessing. It is by continuous zeal, and not merely by paroxysms, that the work of the Lord is to be carried on with success: and upon this, under the blessing of God, we must rely, for both doing and getting good. As it is the law of our moral, as well as of our physical nature, that high excitement is followed by proportionate collapse, we must be watchful not only against having our feelings raised artificially to too high a pitch by revival measures, but also against allowing them to sink too low after methods, which though they are not enthusiastic, are still somewhat out of the usual course. Whatever methods for producing a revival are employed they should all be restoratives, partaking more of the tonic and intended for abiding strength, than of the stimulant, administered only for present excitement. And as far as my own experience and observation extend, that is the effect likely to be produced by those services in which I have been engaged at home, or have witnessed abroad.

I am well aware, that all new measures require to be controlled and directed by a sober mind, lest they should be carried further than those who originated them intended, and end in enthusiasm, extravagance, and absurdity. Enthusiasm has not certainly been the extreme to which our churches have hitherto been

prone, but the apathy and cold stiff formality which are opposed to it. Still, we have need to be upon our guard. If Satan cannot prevent good from being done, he will pervert it; and when he cannot keep us quiescent, will endeavour to hurry us on into eccentricity and extravagance. I have already seen some want of judgment, in the arrangements of protracted meetings. While the zealous and enterprising are in movement and in action, it is well for the more cool and calculating to observe their plans of operation, and be ready to sound the word of caution. New measures ought to be scrutinized, not indeed with a bigotted attachment to antiquity: nor on the other hand with a passionate love of novelty. There is, I admit, no small portion of excitability in the public mind just now; and in such a state of the religious community, it is well for us to take heed that we do not feed the appetite for novelty, instead of contributing to the strength and growth of an intelligent, manly, and ardent piety. With all this disposition to be cautious, and to encourage caution in others, I still am delighted to observe the desire which is become so common after revivals, and the steps which are taken to obtain them. The re-publication, at such a period, of the work of that illustrious man, Jonathan Edwards, is a seasonable and valuable attempt to fan, and at the same time to guide, the flame. That great writer of practical logic and theological controversy, was not likely to be misled in his own judgment of revivals, or to mislead others. It was his rare felicity to possess one of the clearest and profoundest of human intellects, united with one of the warmest and most spiritual of renewed hearts. And what is still more in point, he did not write on revivals as a mere speculatist, who

had no observation or experience: for in his own congregation and town occurred one of the most extraordinary outpourings of the Spirit that ever took place even in that land of heavenly showers. He therefore was no less qualified to write upon the subject by what he had seen, than by what he had thought and heard. With a mind of wondrous sagacity, not only in detecting the sophisms and fallacies of a wrong process of thinking, but equally so in detecting the deceitful processes of wrong feeling, he was singularly gifted to guide our opinions in all matters connected with the subject of this treatise. Without conceding too much to the authority of his great name, I might say, that no man need to blush to own himself the advocate of revivals, and of revival measures, when his acute and masculine understanding saw nothing in them but what, when genuine and uncorrupted by fanaticism, called for devout admiration and gratitude. May the circulation of this admirable work, accompanied as it is to be, by notes by my much esteemed friend the Rev. W. Patton, D.D., of New York, be the means, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, of stimulating and guiding that zeal in the cause of revivals of religion, which already begins so happily and so extensively to prevail in this country.

J. A. JAMES.

June 19, 1839.

INTRODUCTORY PREFACE

TO THE LONDON EDITION OF

LECTURES ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION, BY CHARLES G. FINNEY.

My much esteemed friend, the Rev. W. Patton, D.D., of New York, having undertaken, during his sojourn in this country, to revise for publication the lectures on Revivals by Mr Finney, has solicited from me a short introductory notice of the work. I consent to this request, upon condition of being allowed to mingle caution with recommendation. Viewed as a whole, the work is perhaps better adapted to some parts of the United States of America than to this country; but at the same time it contains much that is calculated to be eminently useful wherever the English language is spoken, and the gospel of Christ is preached. Colloquial and unpolished, not to say somewhat coarse, in its style, and occasionally familiar, almost to irreverence, in speaking of God and his proceedings, it is still a heart-stirring book, and if read with a discriminating judgment, can scarcely fail to do good, especially to ministers. There is a distinctness of object, a steadiness of aim, and a straightforwardness of manner in reference to the salvation of souls, which are worthy the attention of all, and may be imitated with advantage, even by

those who do not approve of all the author's sentiments and measures.

It has long appeared to me, that many of the American preachers greatly excel in their close and searching manner of dealing with the conscience: they seem to understand better than perhaps we do in this land how to reason with and to persuade this faculty, and make it more the object of their preaching, "by manifestation of the truth, to commend themselves to every man's conscience, as in the sight of God;" so that, to use the language of Mr Hall, "their addresses are so characteristic, that the conscience of the audience feels the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual knows where to class himself." This is one of the most striking features of Mr Finney's lectures. Another, and one of great importance to be noticed by the reader, is a constant and emphatic inculcation of the sinner's duty immediately to repent of sin, believe in Christ, and turn to God with entire submission and supreme love; while, at the same time, it is shown that there is nothing to prevent this, but the guilty cause which is found in the depravity of his own heart. Mr Finney resolves human accountability, as all correct theologians must do, not into the possession of renewing and sanctifying grace, or, in other words, into moral ability, but into the possession of natural faculties, of external revelation, and of sufficient inducements, or what is usually called natural ability. In doing this, however, he sometimes uses language, and adopts a style of address, which would lead some to conclude, judging only by selected paragraphs, that he denied the necessity of the work of the Spirit in regeneration. This, as the general strain of the book clearly proves, is

not the case; but it is certainly to be regretted that a little more caution had not been used in some places, when speaking of this important and mysterious topic. Nor does he appear to me to present, with sufficient clearness or frequency, the offers of the Spirit as an inducement to the sinner to repent. We are under the dispensation of the Spirit, and though we are to remind the impenitent that nothing but a guilty cause prevents them from turning to God, yet nothing short of Divine grace will make them willing to turn, which grace is promised to the prayer of faith. It is not enough to tell the sinner he could repent if he would, and will be justly condemned if he do not; this is all true, but it is not the whole truth, for God is ever ready to assist him, a fact which surely ought to be communicated to him to engage him to the work.

Although Dr Patton will, I am sure, rescind some of the objectionable passages, and (so far as he can do it, with an honest regard to the author's sentiments,) will modify others, he will after all use the pruning knife more sparingly than I could wish. Much will remain, that, with all my value for certain parts of the book, I desire to see expunged, in order to adapt it more to the taste of English readers.

Many will probably be of opinion, that there is in the lectures rather too much that looks like what may be called "a getting up of revivals of religion." If by this be meant, that no means at all are to be used when the spiritual state of a church is low to revive it, the objection is irrational and unscriptural; but if nothing more be intended than that no means are to be used but such as are sanctioned by Scripture and reason, it is very true. Let any one read over carefully what

Mr Finney has recommended to be adopted as means to be used, and his enumeration of hindrances to be avoided, and he will see much that commends itself to the judgment and heart of every true Christian, as scriptural, rational, and appropriate. If some of the directions are minute, and descend to particulars which have a ludicrous air in connexion with so grave a subject, it should be recollected that they were written for parts of America where, for aught we know, they may be very necessary; nor should we forget, what perhaps we are in danger of forgetting, how much of the effect of services, in themselves very solemn, depends on many little things which deepen or disturb the impression. It is bad philosophy to despise minute circumstances, when you wish to produce great effect, and where the effect, in some measure, really depends, in the order of means, upon such minutiæ. The results of all our public services are in some measure dependent on the decorum and solemnity with which they are maintained, and the convenience with which the attendants are accommodated.

If I may allude to particular lectures, I would say, that while those on Prayer contain many admirable and useful remarks, I think the author's views of "believing prayer" are somewhat exceptionable, and require to be read with great caution. The lectures on "False Comforts to Sinners," "Directions to Sinners," "Instructions to Converts," "Instruction of Young Converts," contain much that is calculated to correct some false, and, I regret to add, too prevailing methods, of dealing with these respective classes of persons.

With these cautions, (and some others might be added,) I do not hesitate or scruple to recommend the

perusal of this singular volume, unlike every other with which I am acquainted. Even where it is not followed as a guide, or set up as a standard, it may be useful both as a corrective and a stimulant. I feel that it has done me good, and I know that it has done good to others; and I believe it is adapted to do good to all, who will read it with a sifting judgment and a pure intention. May God the Holy Spirit render its circulation the means of stirring up the hearts of both our pastors and the churches committed to their care, to seek after a revival of true and undefiled religion, if not in the methods here laid down, yet in a way that shall commend itself to their judgment as more in accordance with the scriptures of truth! "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation!"

J. A. JAMES.

June 18th, 1839.

THE BEARING OF THE

AMERICAN REVIVAL ON THE DUTIES AND HOPES OF BRITISH CHRISTIANS.

Read at the Meeting of the Congregational Union, May 13, 1858.

Are these things so? Is it a fact that great masses of men, in the most intensely commercial, energetic, and politically-sensitive nation upon earth, have been simultaneously moved with a concern regarding their relation to God and their eternal interest; that an awakening up to the claims of religion has been, and still is taking place over the United States of America, unparalleled even in the history of that land of revivals; that it has penetrated not only into the ordinary spheres of religion, but has made the voice of God to be heard in the busy scenes of trade, the colleges of learning, the resorts of fashion, the ships, the schools, the hotels; and that it has drawn hundreds of thousands, including men of all parties in politics, all denominations in religion, including Infidels, Unitarians, Roman Catholics, and even Jews, into a deep solicitude about salvation? If so, with what profound and serious attention should the report of this fact be heard; with what anxious and cautious research, with what freedom from prejudice and partiality should it be investigated by us!

No constant and intelligent observer of the processes of nature will allow any remarkable phenomenon to escape his notice; nor will he stand by with idle wonder or uninquisitive scepticism, but will instantly examine its nature, causes, and effects. Shall Christians, and especially shall Christian ministers, be less ready or less eager to notice and examine any great and unusual occurrence in the spiritual world? Shall the majestic displays of God's power arrest and fix the attention of the philosopher, and the manifestations of His grace be unobserved by the believers in revelation? Let us, with reverence and awe, turn aside and behold this great sight. If what has just been read to us* be only a meteoric blaze of enthusiasm, it is really so splendid as to demand regard. Make what we will of it, come to what conclusion we may, inquiry is our obvious and imperative duty; and, however I may regret that it has not fallen to some other hand than mine to direct attention to it, I do rejoice that the Committee of the Union have determined to set apart this morning to the consideration of the subject.

The United States of America constitute so unique a nation, that it might, perhaps, be expected on a priori grounds, that her religious course would in some measure be peculiar to herself. Hence, almost from the time of the landing on her shores of the Pilgrim Fathers, that country has been visited occasionally by extraordinary effusions of the Holy Spirit. Without questioning for a moment the fact of a Divine sovereignty in the dispensation of mercy, a fact which I firmly believe, and into which I primarily resolve all

* A statement of the facts of the religious revival in America, by Mr Charles Reed. Ed.

that has taken place in this and former awakenings, we may, perhaps, find some peculiarities in the condition of American society that will, in the order of means, account in some measure for what has occurred; for there is no doubt that God, even in carrying out His sovereign purposes of good, employs second causes that are adapted to bring about the intended result. In a country where the social fabric is less artificially elaborated than it is with us; where the current of public opinion and sympathy flows more freely than here, and is less checked by the barriers of aristocratic castes; where there is less restraint imposed by circumstances on individual thought, feeling, and action, a common sentiment, especially on the subject of religion, is more likely than in other places to exist, and to assume the form of a spiritual epidemic, using that term in no other sense than its etymological meaning. Then, again, it is to be recollected that the American character partakes largely of the excitability, energy, and impetuosity of a nation full of the life and ardour of youth. This is exemplified in all its pursuits of politics, commerce, and general enterprise. It may be also observed, that the United States are without a religious establishment. There is no barrier of this kind, to check the intercommunion of public sentiment and feeling. Not that I mean for a moment to insinuate that an established church cannot receive the reviving influence of the Holy Spirit. The most remarkable revival that has taken place in this country in modern times is that which has blessed the Church of England in the rise and spread of a pure evangelism. But what I intend by this remark is, that an establishment necessarily, by the alienation of feeling to which it gives rise, produces

another impediment to the flow of common sentiment; and therefore there is a greater probability of a general movement in a country where this hindrance does not exist. This alienation, it may be admitted, is also produced by the sectarianism of the various denominations, but not in the same degree. Episcopacy, even where not established, as in America, is too much bound up with forms and prescriptions to allow of that freedom of action which a revival, such as that which has now taken place, requires. If this showing be correct, while it will help to account for the religious movement in the United States, it will lead to the conclusion that we are not to look for precisely the same type, or, at any rate, the same generality, of revival in this country, however heartily we may desire, seek, and expect to approach it.

Moreover, for my own part, I regard this mighty work of God, as intimately connected with the future of that wondrous people, and their destined influence upon the world's coming history. With territory that would support half the world's existing inhabitants, and a population doubling in less time than twenty-four years; possessing all the progressive energy of the Anglo-Saxon race, and all the resources of the Anglo-Saxon language and literature, let any one imagine what that nation must be, and must do, in another century, when, if its population go on increasing upon the present ratio, it will number more than four hundred millions of the world's citizens. Can we not, then, see a reason why God should step out of His usual course with such a people to prepare them for their great work in bringing on the world's population and evangelization?

I believe, then, most entirely, that the present move-

ment is a mighty work of God, a rich and glorious display of his new-creating power, a loud call to the land in which it takes place, and to all others, to learn what he can do, and what they should do, a kind of type of that glorious event, when, amidst millennial power and glory, a nation shall be born in a day.

That it must indeed be a genuine revival is, I think, satisfactorily proved, not only by its origination, extent, and results, but by its character. Produced by no exciting means, no forcing, hot-bed growth, no fervid appeals to passion or imagination; attended by no wild outcries, no physical convulsions, no bodily disorders, no frenzied emotions; all, with few and small exceptions, is deep solemnity and in strictest harmony with the profoundest devotion. It is not the crackling blaze of thorns beneath the pot, obstreperous and transient; but almost noiseless as the tongues of fire which sat upon the brows of Apostles on the day of Pentecost. It is not the ripple of the shallow stream, but deep and silent as the course of that river which gives life wherever it flows. One of the most convincing proofs of its Divine source and causation is the spirit of catholicity which characterises the movement. Sectarianism, which is the wisdom that comes from beneath, is to a great extent swallowed up by that wisdom which comes from above; and if we may credit the accounts which come to us, it is introducing a firmer morality into the pursuits of trade and the habits of social life.

I am aware that there are persons, and many Christian people, too, who deny all periodicity in religious impulse. They dislike revivals. "Why," they say, "should the Divine One, who is always love and power, be considered as operating impulsively and periodically

on the human soul and on masses of the people, sometimes shining and sometimes withdrawing?" "And, moreover," they say, "the expectation of such seasons becomes in the end a motive for sloth and inaction, and for the neglect of an even and constant culture of the religious nature."

This has some truth in it, and I hesitate not to say, that, for ministers to rely upon occasional or periodical revival seasons for their usefulness, instead of the uniform and ordinary methods of preaching and pastoral work, would be most fatal to their success, as it would be to the spiritual well-being of Christians to look to them for the maintenance of their spiritual life. Still it cannot be denied than an irregular periodicity characterises, to a certain extent, the operations of God both in nature and providence. Even in the vernal season itself the principle of fertility sometimes seems stagnant, and at others to flow with rapidity. In the history of nations and the human race, there are periods when its great motive powers appear all to be exerted and others when they seem to sleep, periods of advance and retrogression. Providence has at one time the stillness of the lake, at another the rush of the torrent. The tidal wave of progress rises sometimes to an unusual height and force, and bears mankind further onward in a few years than double that number of centuries may have done before.

It is an undoubted fact that religious, like other impulses, have come on the world at intervals, and we do find, from the day of Pentecost, all along the line of Church history, that there have been seasons when these religious impulses were more than usually fervent, and religious labours more than ordinarily successful.

They occurred under the preaching of Augustine and Chrysostom, and under that of Claude of Turin, in the ninth century; under Wycliffe, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague.

Such, in fact, was the reformation of the sixteenth century. Such, also, was the revival under the ministry of Whitfield and Wesley. And in most of these cases I am bold to affirm that they were followed by political and moral reforms, and the work proved itself divine by its beneficent results.

I am aware that an objection is taken by some to this movement because of its occurrence in a country so deeply involved in the crime of slavery and the prejudice against colour. Will it be affirmed, then, that no conversions take place in the slave states and even in slave-holding churches? If conversions do take place at all under such circumstance, may they not be effected sometimes in unusual numbers? It must be recollected also, that the great revival in this country under Whitfield and Wesley, occurred when England was guilty of the atrocities and horrors of the accursed slave-trade, and that Whitfield himself, at the very time he was converting souls by thousands, both in America and in this land, was a slave-holder in connection with his orphan-house in Georgia, though it must be admitted that the criminality of slavery was not then understood as it now is. It is a fact, however, that the present awakening is chiefly in the free states. Would God it may spread far and wide in the others, and rouse up the conscience of the south, as it must do if the work be of God, to see and feel the enormity of its conduct in carrying on the atrocious slave system!

That this movement is of God, and a real work of

his blessed pirit, may be argued, to refer again to that topic, from the manner of its origination. Great changes, either in the world of nature or of grace, are not so sudden as they often appear. The verdure, bloom, and beauty of spring seem occasionally to burst all at once upon us; but the frost and snow of winter had been preparing the channels for the principle of fertility to flow, and thus to convey the sap to the grass and flowers, the plants and the trees. In the case before us, first came the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake of commercial distress; but the Lord was not in the whirlwind. Then came the still, small voice of earnest and believing prayer, and the Lord was there. There was no previous contrivance and application of revival machinery, no sending out of revival preachers, no heralding in by a flourish of trumpets the advent of this great work; the ministry had scarcely any hand in it at first; it welled up in the hearts of the people and rolled on to the pulpit, instead of rolling from the pulpit to the people. Instead of large meetings to hear preachers, there were large meetings of brethren moved with one accord to pray and to open their hearts to one another. Even the churches themselves have not been the sole, perhaps not even the chief instruments of the progress of the work. Former revivals have been generally begun in churches, and continued to a great extent in them; but the present seems to have taken its rise outside the churches, and to have received them into itself, rather than to have been received into them. Another remarkable fact is, that the most numerous, and perhaps the most energetic, promoters of this revival are laymen.

"No revival can surely be less objectionable," says

Mrs Stowe, "than that which takes the form of prayer, and that is the form in which that is now presented to us." Prayer is that which makes man nothing and God everything: this it is which to me gives reality, significance, and importance to the American revival. It is remarkable that no modern language can more fitly describe the existing state of things in America than that of the prophet Zechariah, uttered twenty-three centuries ago: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, It shall yet come to pass that there shall come people, inhabitants of many cities, and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily, and pray before the Lord, to seek the Lord of hosts." I look upon this event as one of the most conspicuous, the most convincing, and the most glorious instances of the power of prayer that has been given to the world since the Day of Pentecost. It is on this feature of the revival that I love to dwell. I survey, with wonder, and joy, and gratitude, this copious shower of Divine influence passing over the United States, not only over hamlets, villages, and towns, but over great commercial cities, second only to London, and gathering to the church of Christ, not only the young, not only excitable women, but thousands of merchants, lawyers, and physicians, and of young men, the hope of the world and the church. And what has done it? Not logic, not rhetoric, not the eloquence of the pulpit, nor the mightiness of the press, but the power of prayer. God has rent the heavens and come down; the mountains have flowed down at His presence, at the call of prayer. Hear it, British Christians! Hear it, ministers of religion! Hear it, all nations upon earth! In all this behold the triumph and the trophy of earnest and

believing prayer, of that blessed exercise, "which is a kind of short vacation for the soul, during which she goes up to breathe a purer atmosphere and to recreate her spiritual health, and from whence she comes down with clearer vision and a purer zeal, seeing how much is yet to be done to make earth like heaven, and with more intense desires to carry on the glorious transformation."

We are admonished to hold our judgment of this great work in abeyance till we see its results; for no impulses, it is said, are more contagious than those of religion. The power of sympathy, we are told, is great, and many in times of excitement have only a sympathetic religion. I know it; but I also know, that sympathy is one of the laws of our mental economy which God presses into His service, and myriads owe their salvation to it. It is according to human nature to feel in masses; it is so in politics, in commerce, and why should it not be so in religion? As mind communicates with mind, so heart speaks to heart. The caution to look to permanent results is wise, for large numbers wrought upon by these events will give fresh proofs that the passions may be moved where the heart is not changed. What then? It merely brings down the results of these extraordinary conversions to the level of ordinary ones; for how many who are professedly converted in quiet times give sad proof in the end, that they were only nominally converted. To expect that this state of things will continue as it is, is to look for that which, in other departments of human action, never exists, I mean that excitement shall be the established and permanent order of procedure. And, to expect that a visible change will by this revival be produced on the

surface of American society; that slavery will at once disappear before it; that commerce will be purified from its corruptions; that the churches will exhibit unmixed the fellowship of saints, and that a religious profession in every case will be maintained with unimpeachable consistency, would be foolishly to expect that the revival is all at once to bring millennial beauty and splendour over the United States. The excitement will not, of course, continue at its present height; the waters will subside; but, like those of the Nile, they will leave a rich deposit, in which verdure shall spring up, and the seed of the kingdom shall take root and flourish; or, to adopt another illustration, occasional revivals, such as that which is now going on in the United States, resemble the fall of a copious, refreshing, and fertilizing rain, after long drought, which, though of transient duration, does incalculable good while it lasts, and leaves a permanent blessing upon the parched land.

The great question, then, for us to take up is, what practical influence this event should have upon ourselves? Now, there appear to me two extremes to be avoided; on the one hand, the scepticism which doubts whether it is a work of God at all, the disposition to resolve it into a mere American peculiarity, a matter to be wondered at, but not in any way to be considered a special work of God to be followed by us.

On the other hand, we must avoid the credulity which supposes that there is no admixture of a human element with God's work; that it is a movement which will extend over the whole surface of the United States, which will end in the entire moral revolution of that great nation, and a revolution which may be expected, in every particular, to have its counterpart in this land.

God's method of dealing both with individuals and with communities is so various, and so adapted, usually, to the circumstances in which they are found, that it would be highly injudicious to look for the same order of Divine procedure, and the same extent of Divine operation in all cases; but something more, abundantly more, than we have ever yet received, may be expected in our case. This event ought to have a powerful influence upon our British churches; and there should be, there must be, and I hope will be, a pressing and universal solicitude that it might. Many of the coolest, wisest, and most philosophic minds in the country where it exists, (and they are the best judges), tell us they believe it is a wondrous work of God, and shall we doubt it? Let us take heed how we mistake, misjudge, or despise the work of God's Spirit. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all that have pleasure therein." His work is honourable and glorious, and He severely condemns those who regard not the operation of His hands.

I have been surprised and grieved to hear the tone of levity in which it has been treated by some among ourselves. It is too serious a matter for burlesque, too great for ridicule, too holy for levity. Oh! let there be nothing remotely approaching to the mockery and contempt which, on the Day of Pentecost, declared the work of the Spirit to be the incoherent ravings of "men full of new wine." Shall we refuse to learn a lesson from it? Is it doing honour to the Spirit of God to take no notice of His most extraordinary operations? Is it doing justice to ourselves not to endeavour to kindle to an intenser heat our own flame by our neighbour's fire? I do not desire, I do not advise a

bustling, artificial effort to get up a revival, nor the construction of any man-devised machinery. I do not aim to raise a cry which comes from the lips, rather than from the depths of men's hearts, and which in the same spirit with which they would get up a bazaar, sounds through the land, "We must have a revival! we must have a revival!" It is not with such levity I wish this matter to be taken up. It must be carried into our hearts and our closets, and pondered over with deep seriousness, solemn inquiry, and anxious examination. It is a subject about which to hold devout conference with the God of all wisdom and grace; about which to converse with one another, minister with minister, and Christian with Christian; a subject to be introduced by pastors into their sermons; and to be brought with emphasis and earnestness before their churches.

The next thing it should lead us to do is, to re-study our Bibles, and learn what real, personal Christianity is, how holy, how heavenly, how spiritual, how loving, how morally and socially excellent a matter pure and undefiled religion is. What separation from the world, what devoutness, what intense earnestness, what conscientiousness, what enlarged benevolence, what unselfishness, what zealous activity, what unearthliness, what germs of celestial virtue, our profession of godliness implies; having examined this, and obtained an impressive idea of it, let us survey the state of the Christian Church and our own state, and ask if we do not need, and ought not to seek, more of the prevalence of such a religion as this, which, in fact, is primitive Christianity. Is the spiritual condition of our churches what it ought to be, what it might be, what it must be, before they can fulfil their high commission as the salt

of the earth and the light of the world? A Christian church, acting up in some tolerable measure to its profession, walking in the holiness of the Gospel, is the strongest and most emphatic testimony for God to our dark revolted world next to that of Christ himself. But, tell me, brethren, oh! tell me, do not the lamps of the golden candlesticks burn dimly, and throw out only a pale disastrous light? If they are not sunk to the condition of Laodicea, which I do not think they are, do they not too nearly resemble that of Sardis? In their liberality and activity they have some noble, Christ-like, God-like features, beyond any age since that of the Apostles. I rejoice in it, and pray for its increase; it is the Church's glory and the hope of the world. Yet I am sometimes afraid the flame of our zeal is not altogether fed by the oil of piety, but in part by the phosphorescence of a far less holy material. Our churches, notwithstanding this public activity, are infected deeply with the spirit of the world; as is proved by their eager haste to be rich, and their unscrupulous means to become so; by their taste for worldly amusements, by their increasing love of ease and luxury, by their declining spirit of prayer and serious attendance upon the means of grace, by their higher appreciation of talent than of truth, and by their lamentable neglect of family religion. I appeal to you, brethren, whether these things are not so; and, if so, do we not need to be revived? I earnestly long to see our churches roused to a consideration of their state, and brought to a conviction that they need a quickening from God, a new baptism of fire, a fresh consecration by the Holy Spirit.

The first impulse of Christians in a time of awakening

is to begin to talk with every one right and left on their soul's salvation. And this is right and proper. Individual effort of no ordinary kind has been carried on in America during the present revival, and must be carried on by us for the conversion of sinners. The whole church must be instinct with life, all the Lord's people must be prophets. The heads of families in their households, men of business in their establishments and connexions, Sunday-school teachers in their classes, must all with renewed energy be up and doing. But is this all? Is it even the first thing? Should there not be first a deep heart-scrutiny by the churches, a looking through one's whole life to see how it harmonises with the spirit of Jesus? "He who finds his heart cold, his views low, his feelings earthly, must not hope to talk himself out of this state by preaching to the impenitent, nor to pray himself out of it in public meetings. No. A deeper work than this must be done. Alone with God his Saviour, he must take his daily life and course, item by item, and see if it has been conformed to Christ. Has he no wedge of gold, no Babylonish vest, no hidden idols, no pledges and gages of the Devil laid away in his house, where he scarce dares to look at them?" All these must be brought out and burned, and his whole life intelligently consecrated to Christ. Do we not need such a spirit of burning as this?

And as regards the conversion of souls among us, I ask with deep and solemn emphasis and with mournful feelings, do we not need a revival? My brethren in the ministry, does there not seem a suspension of the Divine power upon the ministry of the Word? Do we see the dry bones in the valley stir, and hear the noise of their resurrection, as we have in former times done?

We prophesy, but where, oh! where is the breath of heaven? I hear from nearly all quarters, both in the Church of England and out of it, deep complaints and lamentations of the ministers of the Gospel, of a want of success in the way of conversion. Taking into account the clear increase of members, after deducting losses by deaths, emigration, resignation and expulsion, I believe that there would not be found a yearly addition of more than two or three for each church. How many churches are there who go for years without the increase of a unit, how many which are gradually declining! Is not this a melancholy fact? Ought it not to excite lamentation and inquiry? What slow inroads are we making on the domain of Satan! How, at this rate, is our country to be evangelised and the world converted? Can we be satisfied to go on at this rate? How shall we account for this state of things? Are we deficient in the matter and manner of our preaching? Are we losing from our sermons the converting element of truth, and from our hearts the converting power to handle it? Or is conversion not believed and not sought by us? Are we aiming to please instead of seeking to profit? Are we endeavouring to gratify the few by an elaborate intellectualism, or to save the many by a direct appeal to the heart and conscience? Is there not, then, really a suspension, an alarming suspension, of Divine influence, which imperatively, urgently, immediately calls for a renewed spirit of prayer? I believe there is. Then, brethren, we need a revival.

I solemnly and emphatically repeat it. We need a revival, and till we feel our need of it, and confess it, we shall never have it. Oh, let us not lay the flattering

unction to our souls and think all is well. Let not the delusion of the church at Loadicea, nor the deadly state of that at Sardis, fall upon us. Let not a careless spirit seize us, let not a low ambition paralyze us, let not the conversion of a single soul now and then satisfy us while the multitude remain impenitent. For what is that but to catch a drop or two for heaven, while the main stream, the mighty flood of the population, in one terrible cataract, dashes into the maelstroom of perdition below?

Ought we not to desire, intensely desire, and long for, a revival? What sort of ministers, what sort of deacons, what sort of professors, must we be if we do not? Recollect, I do not set up this American type, or any other type of revival, and say we ought to desire this method of Divine procedure. I drop all organizations, all concerted measures, all externalism, all imitations, to seize and hold up the abstract principle, the very core and essence of a true revival, a holier church and a more useful ministry. What we should intensely long for is a better world; a better church, to make a better world; and a better ministry, to make a better church. This is a revival, to have the church brought up really to consider its mission as a witnessing church to the world; and more than this, the church making itself energetically, continually, and extensively aggressive upon the domain of sin and Satan.

We must be willing to be revived; and are we not willing? Many will reply, No, we are not, or we should be revived. We want to be revived as the unbeliever wants to be saved, without giving up the sins that stand in the way of his salvation, and without performing the duties necessary to his obtaining it.

If there come a revival in our ministry, we who belong to it must give up much of our aim at high and ambitious intellectualism, and excessive elaboration, and essay-like style of preaching, and adopt a more earnest, direct, heart-searching, and converting style of public ministration. We must surrender much of our easy, semi-indolent, and occasionally sauntering way of life; we must sacrifice some of the time devoted to the amenities and luxuries of literature for objects more intimately connected with our ministry; we must lay ourselves out more for the conversion of souls; we must take some of the hours we spend in the parlour, and even in the study, and give them to the anxious inquirers after salvation. This ought to be habitually done, but more especially in those harvest times of our ministry, when God in a remarkable manner pours out His Spirit upon our labours and upon our congregations. Are we willing to do this?

And then, as regards the churches, a willingness to be revived means their disposition to throw off their indifference, their lukewarmness, their worldliness, their inconsistencies, their unscrupulousness in trade, their unchristian tempers, their neglect of prayer and the means of grace, their selfishness, their love of ease and show; and, in addition to all this, it means their being willing, desirous, anxious to become more devout, self-denying, liberal, humble, and loving. Are our churches prepared for such a state of things as this, desiring it, and longing for it? Do they want to be really less conformed to the world, and are they willing to receive the spirit of self-crucifixion?

Am I asked what means should be used beyond a spirit of fervent, believing prayer? I shall prescribe

very little. I want God's work, not man's. I like not the minute, artificial, and man-devised inventions to which some have resorted, as if all things were to be done by rule and measure, and a spiritual machinery, the products of which are to be brought out upon principles of arithmetical calculation. I want no revivalist preachers; and yet, if God has qualified some men more than others to be evangelists, I see no objection to their being employed occasionally to assist, but not to supersede, the pastor. There is one means, however, open to us all, on which too much stress cannot be laid. I refer to prayer. The mighty work on the other side of the Atlantic is, as we have said, the triumph and trophy of prayer. It is a new proof and display of the mighty force of this great motive power in God's moral government of our world. "Prayer," as Robert Hall says, "is a spring which the Almighty never fails to touch when He has a rich blessing to communicate to His church." And God is lifting up a voice on this subject, which grows louder and louder continually, as if He meant that it should be heard at last. Notwithstanding the general spirit of propagation and organization by which this age is distinguished, evidence is but too demonstrative that all hope for the conversion of the world must perish if there be not some fresh outpourings of the Spirit, and some fresh power of prayer to obtain them.

Let the real era of prayer now appear to have come. Hitherto, it has not come. I may be wrong; my hopes may be too low, and my fears too high; but I give it as my deliberate judgment, founded upon what I have seen in my own congregation and town, and on what I hear from other quarters, that the spirit of prayer has rarely,

if ever, been so low in our churches in modern times, as it has been till lately. Christians seem to be more ready for everything than for prayer, and can do every thing better than pray. No reason is apparent why a revival in this particular should not henceforth commence. Let the past be characterised as it may by coldness and neglect, neither the present nor the future ought or need to be. The end of the neglect of prayer is, I trust, at hand. A time will come, doubtless, when the place of meeting for prayer shall have more attractions than the eloquence of any mortal, or any angel's tongue. And why should not the present be the date of that period? Let us all, brethren, this day, in this place, make a covenant with God and each other, to give ourselves to prayer. Let us call to mind how Abraham and Moses, and Elias and Daniel and Paul, above all, how the blessed Jesus laboured in prayer, and resolve in God's strength to pray in like manner. Oh! what an influence upon the world's eternal destinies would the hearts and the closets of God's people have if they were stirred up thus to pray! What wonders of grace would be wrought in our churches, what accessions would be made to the ministry, what an impulse would be given to missions, and what brightness would then be thrown on the dark places of the earth, and the Church's future prospects! The Church, straitened in herself, has no just views of the immensity of her Lord's resources; she seems afraid of indulging in excess in her petitions, when, in fact, she has comparatively asked nothing.

People are surprised, and ask, with a sceptical tone and look, is it a real work in America, and may we expect anything like it? Why should they be surprised?

Are we not under the dispensation of the Spirit, and not under the arid economy of the law? We know this, and yet we do not give that special place and prominence to the fact which it holds in the Word of God. Ought we not to expect, are we not authorized to expect, some richer effusions, some more wonderful manifestations, some more convincing demonstrations of the Spirit's power than we have been accustomed to witness or receive? Is this Divine Agent confined, and ought our expectations to be confined, to routine, formality, and fixed order and measure? Should we not look for times of refreshing, days of power, intimations of the coming millennial glory? Are not these awakenings the very things we have prayed for, longed for, waited for? Are they not the subject of inspired prophecy? Are they not given to support our faith in Divine prediction, and animate our languid hopes of the coming glory of the millennial age, when a nation shall be born in a day? And are there no hopeful signs of such an awakening amongst us? Do we not see a cloud, though no bigger than a man's hand, rising out of the sea, the auspicious portent of a coming rain? What means this universal stir about the working classes? This breaking down of the barriers of ecclesiastical formalities? This starting up of lay evangelists in the north, and of clerical irregularities in the south? This opening of our abbey churches and cathedrals for the preaching of the Word of God to the masses? This entrance of the Gospel into places of trade and amusement? This gradual removal of the distinction between things sacred and secular? When the sacred are not becoming secular, but the secular sacred. And especially this miniature representation of the American

revivals in some parts of our own country. I could speak of what has occurred in a town in my own neighbourhood, as remarkable for its extent as any that has taken place across the Atlantic. I have in my possession, at this moment, the account of a surprising work which has been carried on in his congregation by a devoted young minister of our own denomination, which, if there were time to read it, would instruct, surprise, and delight us. Let us not be desponding, then, but hopeful. The voice of this revival in America comes to every country, and to every Christian, as the midnight cry of old, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" A new era is struggling in the birth; Christ is moving to re-organize the world. Is it a vision of my imagination? Is it only a spectral form which I see? Or is it, oh! is it the Saviour Himself walking on the waters of the Atlantic, and moving with His face towards Britain? Is it an illusion, or a reality, which leads me to think I hear His voice saying to this country, "Behold! I come quickly, and my reward is with Me!" Oh! brethren, shall we fear Him, neglect Him, repel Him? Shall we, like the mercenary Gadarenes, entreat Him to leave our coasts, or shall we not rather implore His presence, and say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and land upon our shores?"

"Enter with all Thy glorious train,
Thy Spirit and Thy Word;
Lo! Thy church waits with longing eyes,
Thus to be own'd and bless'd."

Before I conclude this already too long address, may I, my beloved and honoured brethren in the ministry, as one who has attained to patriarchal standing, though, I am duly aware, to few of its honours or its claims,

beseech you, with affectionate earnestness, to give this momentous subject your calm, deliberate, solemn, and prayerful attention. Our responsibility is tremendous, and should make us fear and tremble, and in an agony of Spirit to exclaim, "Lord, who is sufficient for these things?" On us does it in some measure depend whether the heaven shall open and the blessing in its fulness come down, whether the life-giving power shall ooze and trickle in drops or flow in streams. How is it we can be so easy in such circumstances, and with such interests dependent upon it? How is it we can sleep so soundly upon our beds, or sit so comfortably around our tables and our fires? Are we, indeed, watching for souls, or trifling with them? Are we so stiffened into formality, so drilled into routine, so enchained by custom, that when any thing new or startling comes across our orbit, or enters into our sphere of observation, we will not notice it, or ask what it means? Shall we who are stationed on the walls of Jerusalem be unprepared with an answer to the question, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" Shall we, who are expected to form public opinion, to influence public sentiment, to direct and control public movement, stand by in this case with cold and careless gaze, or sneering contempt, or actual opposition? Even supposing we take no new steps, shall we not quicken those we already take in our own course? If we adopt no new measures, shall we not be stirred up to carry forward our old ones with more vigour? Let us, oh! let us recollect, that we are the servants of Him who makes His ministers a flame of fire. Dearly beloved brethren, let this be such a meeting as we have never held; let a new baptism of fire come upon us all to-day.

Let this be a time of humiliation for the past, of consecration for the present, and of determination for the future. Let us enter to-day into covenant with each other, and with God, to be more diligent and devoted servants of Christ, and then, depend upon it, we shall be more successful ones. You cannot know, as I do, the solemnity of the feeling that is produced by the conviction that life is almost gone, the awe that comes over the mind of him who knows that he is upon the border country of eternity, and must soon lay down his ministry, and give in his account. Let him, then, in conclusion, conjure you and himself by the solemn vow of our ordination, by the worth and danger of immortal spirits, by the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the felicities of heaven, the torments of hell, and the ages of eternity; by the great white throne, and the presence of Him that sits upon it, before which we must soon appear: let me, I say, conjure you to inquire what use we shall make of the extraordinary events which have called for this paper, and in what way we shall turn it to our own account in watching for souls, reviving the spirit of piety in our churches, and bringing back this revolted world to the dominion of Christ..

THE END OF NINTH VOLUME.

PRINTED BY HUDSON AND SON, BULL STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries
1 1012 01195 5111